

CO-LEARNING OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN THE MIRROR OF WORLD TENDENCIES: DEVELOPING MODERN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract. The article focuses on a number of questions facing 21st century language education owing to new sociocultural changes in human communication, interaction, and co-operation (including Internet-based multicultural communication and co-operation). The author discusses major ways and principles of developing the individual as a successful bilingual or trilingual communicator in the modern multicultural environment. The author also gives an insight into multiculturally oriented language pedagogy in the context of the sociocultural approach to development of language learners' communicative, cognitive, and multicultural abilities through their co-learning of the mother tongue and foreign / second languages. Special attention is paid to the interpretation of such terms as "multiculturally oriented language pedagogy", "multicultural education", "intercultural education", "intercultural dialogue", "intercultural communication", "language teaching in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilisations", "multilevelled co-teaching and co-learning of languages and cultures". The author outlines not only the positive tendencies in developing modern language education, but also draws the reader's attention to some negative tendencies in the educational environment that may destroy educationalists' efforts to develop the appropriate theoretical basis and language practices aiming at learners' cultural and intercultural development.

Keywords: language education; language pedagogy; intercultural dialogue; dialogue of cultures and civilizations; multiculturalism; bilingual communicative competence; sociocultural approach; bilingual sociocultural competence; cultural mediator; cultural guide; the subject of the dialogue of cultures; cultural and language expansion.

The intensive integration process in the modern world has influenced the educational sphere. When talking about language education, it is important to mention that the 21st century definitely requires scientific and methodological integration in the sphere of all language studies (foreign languages, mother and non-mother tongues), as the problems concerning the co-learning of languages and cultures, while preparing a person for living in the modern multicultural world, becoming more topical. Moreover, it is hardly possible to solve the most difficult problems in the process of preparation for intercultural communication using only special methods of studies in this or that language, therefore we need to expand the scope of special methodology.

It is obvious that language pedagogy, which reveals the nature and logic of bilingual and multilingual multicultural education in the modern

world, should develop more intensively. In fact, it also defines the scope of variation in the ways, principles, strategies and methods of co-learning of languages and cultures depending on sociocultural factors that considerably influence the effectiveness of intercultural interaction in the multilingual and multicultural world of the 21st century that is marked by political, economic, cultural conflicts and global interdependence. It is also important to keep in mind that the individual boundaries of intercultural communication have extended significantly for everyone with the help of the constant intensive growth of the multilingual and multicultural World Wide Web.

Figure 1 shows the most important components of this pedagogical branch of knowledge. It is considered that language pedagogy is oriented to:

- **defining** philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, sociological, culturological and didactic bases of multicultural language education;
- **revealing** its nature, logic and principles taking into account the personality forming potential of ALL the co-studied languages and cultures in different didactic contexts of school and higher education institution and their interdisciplinary connection with other topical areas;
- **discovering** the factors that can lead to cultural discrimination and / or cultural expansion while co-learning languages and cultures at school or higher education institution;
- **elaborating** *multilevel and split-level models of sociocultural description* of co-studied languages and cultures for didactic purposes;
- **revealing** the content of the stages forming and developing a multicultural personality at school or higher education institution;
- **elaborating** split-level systems of language teaching of intercultural communication norms while co-learning native and foreign languages in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations;
- **investigating** socializing properties of a) languages as school subjects in their didactic interconnection; b) pedagogical communication in mother and non-mother tongues (including foreign languages); c) educational materials.

Taking into consideration the results of the analysis of theory and practice of language education at the end of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century in the European and North American countries [5, 7, 11-13, 15, 17, 26, 29-32, 34, 36, 37, 41, 47, 48, 50] and on the other continents, we can name the following positive world tendencies in the development and standardization of modern language education:

1) acknowledgement and definition of multiculturalism as one of the most essential components of modern lifestyle and therefore acknowledgement of the need to develop intensively the multiculturally oriented language pedagogy and define its most effective psychological, pedagogical and methodological ways of cultivating the multiculturalism in a modern person in the process of co-learning languages and cultures at school or higher education institution;

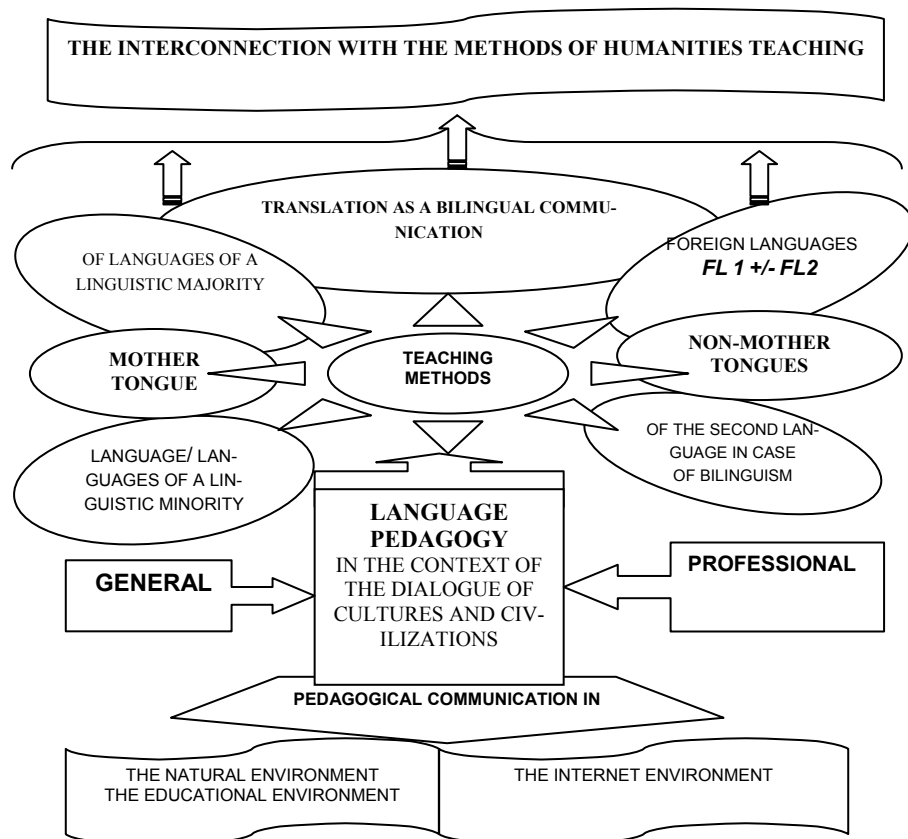


Fig. 1. Language pedagogy in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations

2) expansion of the didactic scope of multilingualism in the modern educational systems (i.e. promoting the principle of didactic linguistic pluralism) and gradual extension of the area of the bilingual / trilingual education at school or higher education institution, where the co-studied languages are used as tools of education and self-education in different fields of knowledge and spheres of activity;

3) recognition of the multi- and split-level nature of language education (and also of its multicultural orientation) as a component of modern multifunctional language training at school or higher education institution and providing its variation in the context of educational rights of a person, interaction of his / her interests, interests of the government, and cultural and linguistic communities, included in the united educational system;

4) finding the ways of standardization of language education, on the one hand, and the effective ways of its practical individualization, on the other, while focusing on the well balanced interaction of linguistic, commu-

nicative, cognitive, culturological, linguoculturological and informational-communicative components in the language education systems that prepares people for intercultural interaction and cooperation in the modern world; therewith we can see the gradual transition from the communicative pragmatic models to the communicative activity models of language education that are culturologically marked;

5) intensification of the positive interaction and integration of interests of supranational communities, government, cultural and linguistic communities that exist in a united educational area or educational areas that influence each other and an individual while solving the problems of standardization and development orientation of language education;

6) awareness of the contradictions that arise between the content of language education, sociocultural context of co-learning of languages and cultures in the Internet environment and beyond its boundaries and the ways of quality evaluation of language education in general and educational progress evaluation of an individual in some certain educational establishment, taking into consideration inter- and supersubject results of language education at school or higher education institution, in particular;

7) a shift from the exaggeration of the pedagogical innovations and realization of the necessity for interaction of educational traditions and innovations, considering cultural heritage of national models of language education and their integration.

The tendencies mentioned above make us specify and sometimes reconsider the aims, purposes, content, systems and models of language education that existed in the 20th century, as well as the requirements to its methodological base in the Internet era that is considered to be one of the life environments of an individual in search for some ways of settling the modern informational-educational contradictions and harmonizing the systems of education and self-education.

It is undoubtedly impossible to elaborate some pedagogic model of language education (which is purposefully oriented to co-learning of languages and cultures that contact each other didactically) without turning to questions of its target purpose. It's common knowledge that the modern models of language education claim to be purposefully oriented to the intercultural communication [8, 11, 12, 16, 21-26, 28, 30, 35-39, 44, 46, 49]. However, it is not clear what kind of intercultural communication is meant. Is it intercultural communication that is limited by interaction with the neighboring countries only, as it is stated in M. Byram's communicative ethnographic approach [26]? Or is it intercultural communication in the scope of one continent or even one of its parts, European or North American, for example?

Or should we discuss some other approach to co-learning of languages and cultures? An approach in the scope of which an individual acquires not

only *special* strategies of culturally acceptable behavior in the country of the studied language, but also the general strategy of orientation in a multicultural world, global norms of interaction and cooperation, means of communicative and cultural personal development for the purpose of successful intercultural communication in any new cultural or cultural-linguistic community? And what are the purposes of teaching a person in this or that educational system to communicate in some certain new languages? May be this or that approach stimulates covert value oriented assimilation or acculturation of an individual to the benefit of some certain cultural and linguistic community without taking into consideration the value of his / her own culture, as it is shown in details by R. Phillipson in his monograph "Linguistic Imperialism" [42].

The existence of different culturologically oriented approaches in the modern language pedagogy and therefore different models of cultural development of an individual by means of learned and co-learned languages depends directly on the way the intercultural communication is understood. In the scope of sociocultural approach to co-learning of languages and cultures [11, 12] the intercultural communication means functionally determined communicative interaction of people who represent different cultural communities on account of the fact that they or some other people realize their belonging to different geopolitical, continental, regional, religious, national, ethnic communities or social subcultures. Therefore, the communicative partners can differ in the following characteristics during the intercultural communication:

- value-oriented worldview;
- lifestyle;
- models of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Therewith the participants of intercultural communication are oriented to the cultural dialogue between them and between cultures and civilizations without opposing one culture to another.

If we consider this interpretation of intercultural communication, then the preparation for it in the sphere of language education should be practiced in the process of co-learning of all the didactically interconnected languages and cultures. On the one hand, it should be performed basing on the principle of an expanding circle of cultures: from ethnic to national, from national to continental cultures and geopolitical layers in the direction of world culture and cultural heritage, of course, without ignoring the socially important subcultures. On the other hand, the process should develop in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations [12]. In other words, the global aspect of world culture is modeled with continental, geopolitical, regional, national, ethnic and socially stratified aspects for the didactic purposes and all that is directed to:

– cultural enrichment of an individual in the process of his / her multi- and subcultural socialization (including educational environment);

– development of his / her bilingual skills: on the level of a cultural mediator as minimum [29] (in the scope of school education), and on the level of an interpreter in the professional environment (at a non-linguistic higher education institution) and a professional interpreter (at a linguistic higher education institution) as maximum;

– development of skills and characteristics that are necessary for playing the social roles of a cultural intermediary as minimum (after finishing high school) and of a participant in the dialogue of cultures as maximum [11, 12] (after finishing a master's programme at a linguistic higher education institution).

The development of ideas of culturologically oriented education (including language education) in Europe contributed to the emergence of such an important all-European political and now pedagogical term as “intercultural dialogue” that has occupied the top position in the modern all-European educational policy [34, 45, 50].

It should be mentioned that on the European continent the intercultural education was used for a long time for harmonizing relations between the representatives of the cultural-linguistic communities and social subcultures in the context of humanitarian law enforcement and fight against different types of discrimination in the society, as well as means of forming some all-European ideas such as “European identity”, “European citizenship” and “European cultural heritage”. In the all-European area the term “intercultural dialogue” became a political priority in 2008 and therefore, a number of countries and not only European ones began searching for some pedagogic ways of preparing their citizens at school or higher education institution for the intercultural dialogue in Europe and beyond its boundaries [45].

The intercultural dialogue (fig. 2) presents a process based on the orientation to mutual understanding and respect, a process that implies an open exchange of opinions between individuals, as well as between social groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic belonging and historical and cultural heritage. Freedom, readiness and ability to express oneself, to listen and understand other people's opinions are required for its implementation. The intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and solidarity of culturally different communities. It instills the feeling of human dignity, understanding of the mutual aim and striving for equality. It is aimed at developing deep understanding of different worldviews and practices of human existence. It increases the chances of cooperation between people (or freedom of choice in it), contributes to personal development of an individual and his / her transformation and induces mutual respect and tolerance [50: 17].

It is also important to single out three levels of the intercultural dialogue: “It (*Intercultural dialogue*) operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world” [Ibid: 10, 11].

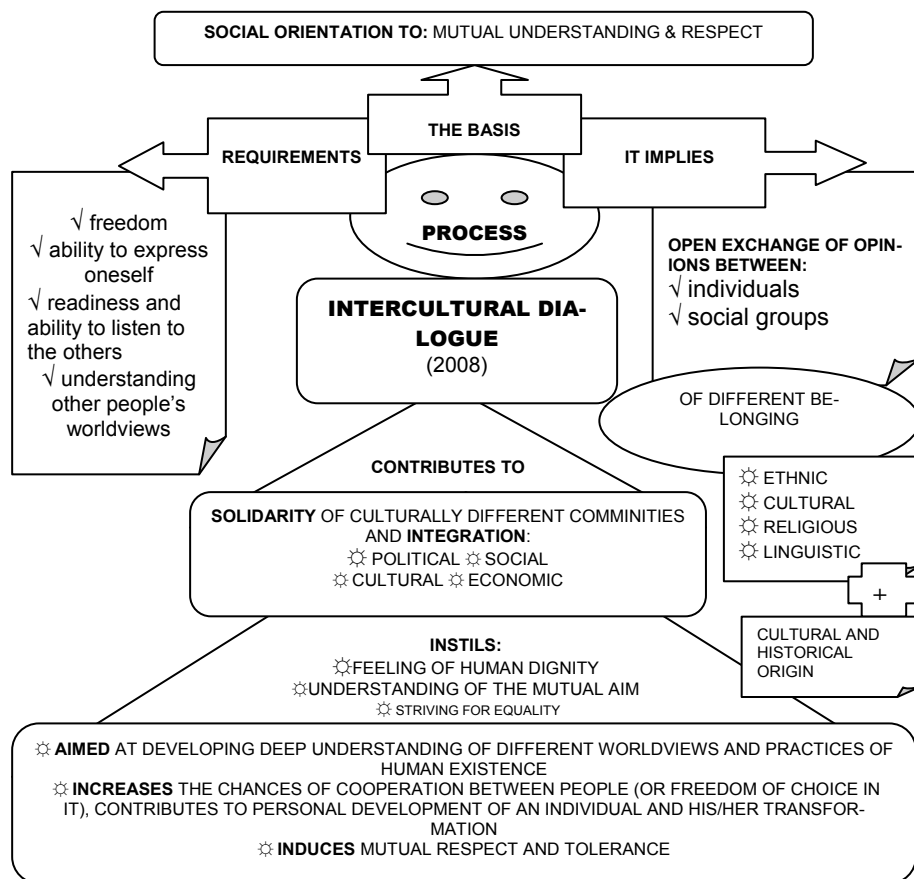


Fig. 2. The intercultural dialogue

However, the analysis of the all-European report “Sharing Diversity. National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe Study for the European Commission: report” of 2008 [45] shows that the first of the three above mentioned levels prevails in the practice of intercultural European education. This level is focused on the mutual intercultural understanding between the traditional national culture and the cultures brought to a certain country by the immigrants.

The term “intercultural dialogue” helps to eliminate the West-European terminological opposition of multi- and intercultural education. In fact, the first level of the intercultural dialogue correlates with the West-European term “multicultural education”, while the second and the third levels correlate with the all-European term “intercultural education”. They are different in the degree of orientation to the development of multiculturalism as a life philosophy in an individual, however, in the all-European document

“White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together As Equals in Dignity” [50] they are considered from the same conceptual point of view.

It should be pointed out that the concept of intercultural dialogue as a basis of modern education (including language education) became a priority in the European pedagogy only in the 21st century. However, in Russia the ideas¹ of teaching different subjects in the context of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations in Russian education [11, 12, 20] have begun developing intensively since the beginning of the 90s. This process concerns educational materials for studying foreign languages, developed on the basis of the sociocultural approach [11, 12] to studying languages of international communication.

Moreover, the principle of teaching foreign languages on the basis of the dialogue of cultures can be found in Russian pedagogy [2, 11, 12] much earlier than the principles of intercultural dialogue and multilingualism, included in the all-European documents [29, 50]. Solutions to a number of purposes of preparation for the intercultural dialogue of the second and the third levels are found both in theoretical and practical spheres of Russian language education² since 1995. First of all, these educational innovations were promoted by the philosophic interpretation of types of interaction between the representatives of different cultures presented by M. Kagan [4] in the scope of philosophic opposition “dialogue of cultures – non-dialogue of cultures”.

In addition, the Russian variant of education with a multicultural component in the scope of sociocultural approach was never limited by the European orientation and developed and is still developing on the basis of the principle of the extending circle of continental cultures in the direction of world cultural heritage [11, 12, 15].

At the same time in Russia of the 21st century the system of preparation for intercultural communication at school or higher education institution definitely requires specification and sometimes reconsideration of the aims, the content, the systems and models of language education that seemed flawless until recently. It is obvious that the focus should be placed on the creation of the models of co-learning of all the didactically interconnected lan-

¹ The idea of creating the didactic model of language education oriented to the preparation for the intercultural communication appeared from time to time in the methodology of teaching foreign languages in different countries [2, 43], however, it wasn't examined in details, until certain culturologically-oriented approaches to co-learning of languages and cultures appeared in the methods of language education and until they were realized in the practice of language teaching.

² For example, it was realized in the academic programmes of studying English for the 2nd-11th grades, teaching materials for 8th-11th grades for classes with enhanced learning of English language, elaborated in the scope of sociocultural approach, in the practice of teaching foreign languages at gymnasiums, lyceums and schools with enhanced learning of English language.

guages and cultures (cultures of mother and non-mother tongues) that provide the correlation of psychological-pedagogic and methodological principles. For example, in language pedagogy with a multicultural dominant the communicative orientation and culturologically marked learning of Russian language as a native one and the majority languages of Russian republics should take place.

There's no doubt that the educational modeling of bilingual / trilingual intercultural communication, first of all, requires didactic correlation in the description of the aims of every co-studied language at school or higher education institution (as the aims define the general strategy of preparation for the intercultural communication) and their description in terms of all the components of the communicative competence in order to eliminate the irrational contradictions between the methods of teaching mother and non-mother tongues, as those contradictions tend to hinder the fully-fledged development of the communicative culture of the students that is performed by means of all the co-studied languages.

In fact, the first try on the state level to eliminate at least some of those contradictions was undertaken through the Russian federal standards of foreign and Russian languages in 2004. On the basis of the didactic agreement in both cases one of the aims of learning languages at school was described in terms of "competence" [18, 19]. In order to describe the Russian language the following components of communicative competence were used: language and linguistic competence, verbal competence, culturological competence [19].

The communicative competence was also one of the crucial points in describing a foreign language as a school subject; however, it also comprised language / linguistic, verbal, sociocultural, compensatory, self-educational, informational-communicative competences. The strategy of communicative development of pupils was regarded in the context of close interaction with the strategies of their development and education in the sphere of intercultural cooperation in the modern world. And though there is no unanimous agreement on the terminology, it should be admitted that the orientation to the communicatively and culturologically oriented language education was recognized as a didactic dominant in learning foreign and native (Russian) languages.

It should be noted, that in the didactic plan of the specialized higher education the composition of the communicative bilingual competence is, of course, more complicated, than at school. In Figure 4 the generalized description of bilingual communicative competence is given in its development from the all-European level C1 to the level C2³ that can be considered to be

³ To know more about the all-European levels of communicative competence, please, read *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment*, 2001. Cambridge: CUP.

one of the purposes of the intercultural preparation of a student at a linguistically-oriented higher education institution. Here every component of communicative competence is detailed considering professional field-oriented preparation of a student in a certain higher education institution⁴.

We will not pay much attention to the language and verbal competences, as they are thoroughly examined and described in the methodological materials. Therefore, we should turn to discussing the bilingual sociocultural competence (fig. 3, 4) which is essential to every intercultural interaction.

The bilingual sociocultural competence (beginning with the all-European level B2 of the communicative verbal competence, that is a threshold advanced level) gives a person an opportunity:

- **to be able to differentiate between** various sociocultural markers of the authentic linguistic environment and sociocultural characteristics of the communication participants;

- **to predict** probable sociocultural obstacles in conditions of intercultural communication and the ways of their elimination;

- **to assimilate into** the foreign environment, following the rules of courtesy of the other culture and showing respect to the traditions, rituals and lifestyle of this culture.

- **to perform a role of a cultural mediator as minimum and of a party of a dialogue of cultures as maximum** during the interaction of his / her compatriots with the representatives of other cultural and linguistic communities;

- **to use** sociocultural knowledge, skills and abilities in the process of collaboration with the representatives of other cultural and linguistic communities.

It also creates the basis for:

- **to self-study** other countries, nations, cultural communities and fulfill one's own cognitive and informational needs and interests;

- **to acquire the effective methods and means of presenting one's native culture** in the environment belonging to another language or culture;

- **sociocultural self-education** in any other unknown spheres of communication (on the basis of individual's demands);

- **to develop new kinds of sociocultural competence**, for example, professional or field-oriented;

- **to work** with the Internet resources and communicate in the global network both with native and non-native speakers of the studied languages.

⁴ When talking about multicultural communicative preparation at the higher education institution, we should remember that it implies preparation for the intercultural interaction not only with the native speakers, but also with the non-native speakers and not only in the foreign language, but also in the native language, to which, as we have noticed, little attention is paid in the language education.

Sociocultural competence (as any other component of the communicative competence) is subdivided into levels. However, until recently mainly language and verbal types of competence were regarded as a subject of the multilevel description [28, 30-32]. At the same time there is no all-European multilevel description, we can examine only Russian four-level description of this component for the educational purposes [3]. However, it is hardly possible to solve the problems of standardization of language education with the multicultural component without clear understanding of the levels of cultural development of an individual by means of co-studied languages in the process of transition from one educational step to another, from monolingual to bilingual sociocultural competence and then to multicultural competence.

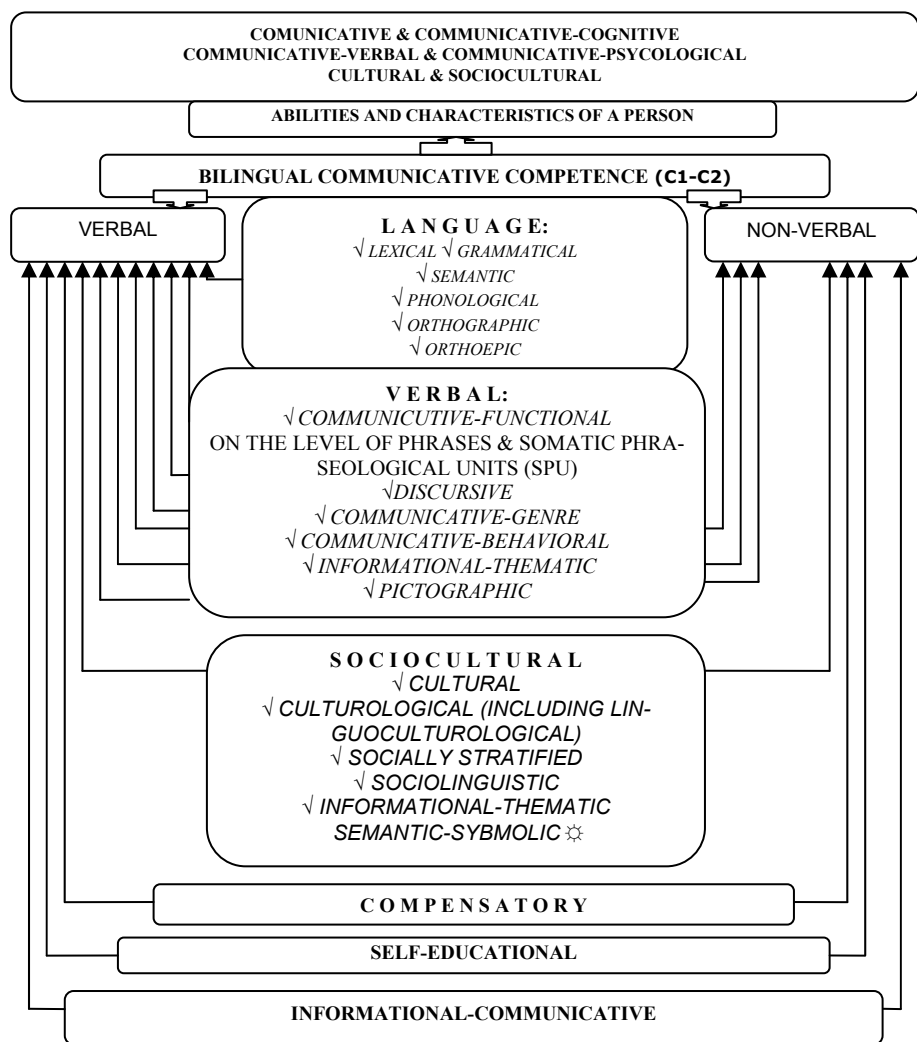


Fig. 3. Bilingual communicative competence from the level C1 to the level C2

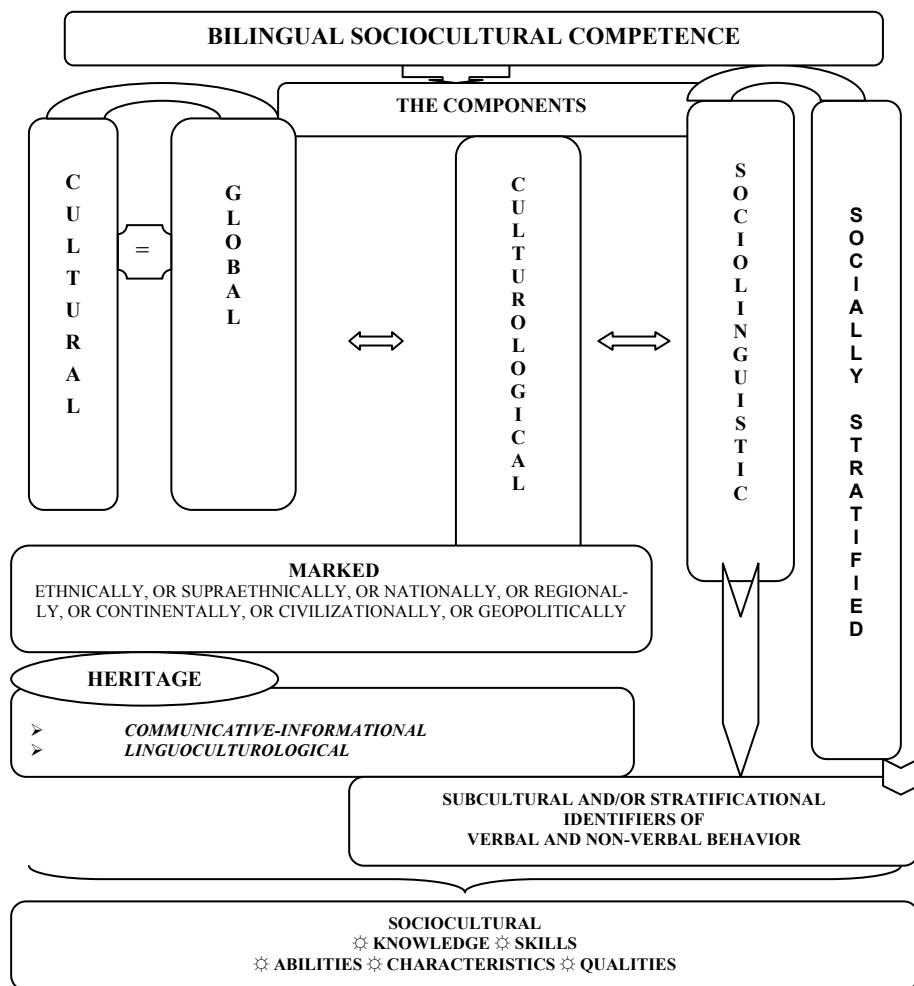


Fig. 4. The components of the bilingual sociocultural competence

We can also single out several levels of cultural development of an individual, included in the process of bilingual education with a multicultural component. These levels are distinguished on the basis of: a) the level of command of the native and non-native language (including foreign languages), based on the all-European scale of communicative competence [29] and b) social role that a person can perform in a society (possessing certain level of command of the co-studied languages).

Figure 5 shows that a person can perform the social role of a cultural mediator largely when he / she acquires bilingual communicative competence at the all-European level starting with the level B2 (threshold advanced

level) on the all-European scale⁵ [Ibid]. However, in order to perform it effectively, an individual should develop from a monolingual observer to a bilingual observer, then to an amateur researcher and a guide in the culture of the co-studied languages. Before becoming a bilingual participant of the dialogue of cultures in a multicultural environment, a person, performing the role of a cultural intermediary, is also required to pass several levels of cultural development. Every social role can be described in terms of all the components of the communicative competence. This description would be oriented to the secondary and professional higher education and it would be as detailed as it is didactically necessary for the intercultural preparation in some certain didactic context.

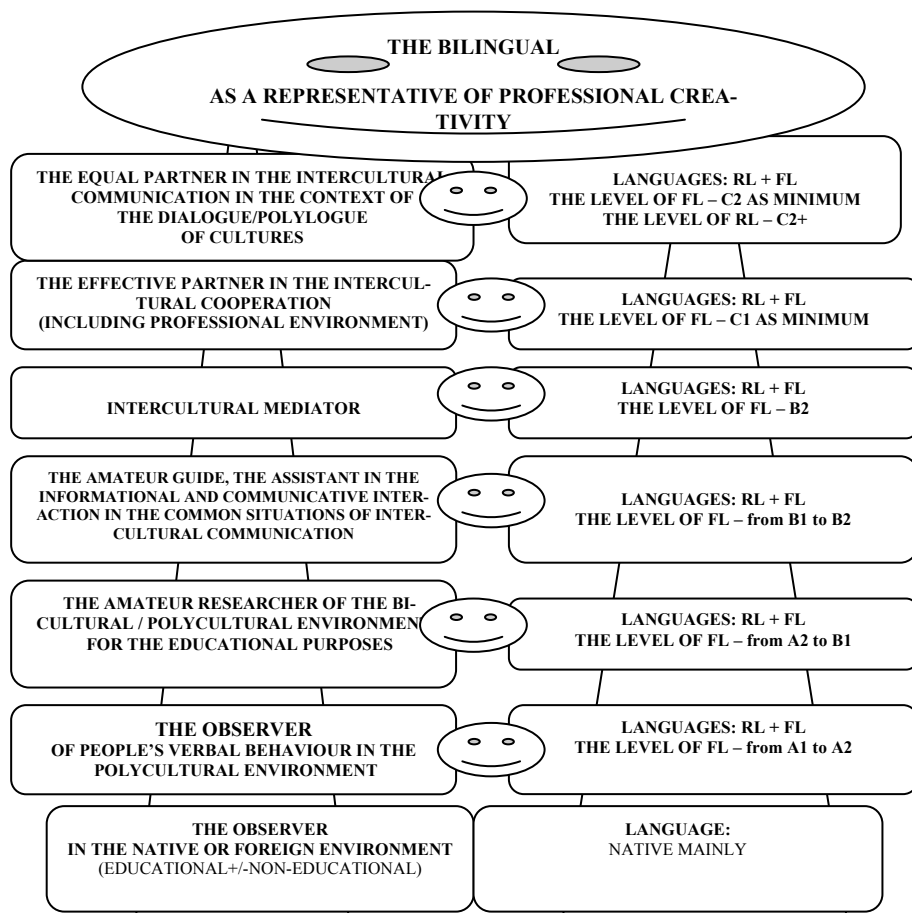


Fig. 5. Correlation of the social multicultural roles and the all-European levels of command of Russian (RL) and foreign languages (FL)

⁵ To know more about the all-European levels of communicative competence, read *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, teaching, assessment*, 2001. Cambridge: CUP.

It is also worth mentioning that the multicultural competence is a special subtype of sociocultural competence that can be monolingual and / or bilingual / trilingual. It consists of common cultural competence, on the one hand, and of culturological and / or linguoculturological (depending on the level of language education), socially stratified and sociolinguistic types of competence (that can be ethnically, nationally, regionally, continentally, civilizational or even geopolitically marked), on the other hand.

The modern intercultural communication is expanding intensively on the continents and because of:

- international cooperation of the cultural and linguistic communities and their representatives searching for the solutions to the global challenges of the 21st century;

- positive development of the modern civilizations, education and humanitarian law enforcement (wherever a person is situated);

- realization of the professional and other interests for the purpose of cultural development and polycultural enrichment and protection of the global cultural heritage (including protection from cultural vandalism and so forth).

The polycultural educational model in the scope of the sociocultural approach is based on the following principles:

- the principle of cultural and linguistic interdisciplinary complementarity of the educational communication in any language, while all the components of the communicative competence are being formed and the common culture of an individual and professionally relevant types of culture are undergoing the process of development;

- the principle of the taken into consideration communicative personality development in the language education system and during self-education in Russian and foreign languages;

- the principle of orientation to the gradual bilingual development of an individual considering his / her communicative and verbal demands and abilities, as well as to the special features of the sociocultural context of co-learning of Russian and foreign languages in Russia;

- the principle of creating the conditions for the verbal creativity in any of the studied language (including the translation practice);

- the principle of using the acquired knowledge and skills in the practical activity of students (in their educational and professional activity), as well as in the process of modern direct and indirect intercultural interaction (including the Internet environment);

- the principle of co-learning of languages based on the dialogue of cultures and civilizations and oriented to the gradual and methodologically justified extending circle of cultures which are didactically used in the educational process (from the ethnic, supraethnic, stratified subcultures to the regional, continental and global ones);

- the principle of didactic cultural conformity;
 - the principle of creating an adequate linguodidactic basis for co-learning of languages considering the sociocultural and linguocultural factors of their development, existence and functioning in the society;
 - the principle of humanistic and irenic nature of the pedagogic communication in the process of co-learning of languages and cultures;
- the principle of intensive and didactically reasonable using of the Internet and its intercultural potential.

However, we should also pay attention to the negative tendencies in the development of modern language education:

(a) cultural and linguistic expansion in the educational sphere and “PRization” of language education (in the published materials and/or in the administrative nomenclature) [13, 40, 42];

(b) the dominance of the disguised language policy over the policy that is officially stated in the supranational and national educational documents [13];

(c) the exaggerated role of the English language in language education (therefore, a disguised disregarding of linguistic pluralism) as one of the features of linguistic imperialism [40, 42];

(d) the growing amount of educational and methodological materials of poor quality and with the negative socializing features [12];

(e) the developing cultural imperialism [42] that stimulates cross-cultural and cultural-political conflicts;

(f) informational-communicative vandalism;

(g) informational-communicative suppression of the creative potential of an individual, in the educational environment as well.

The list of negative tendencies in language education described above is not full. And if we do not try to overcome those difficulties in the scientific and practical spheres, then the positive phenomena of language pedagogy will lose their influence in the course of training an individual for the communicative, intellectual and polycultural self-development in the society and in the professional environment. This unfavourable course of events is especially probable if the world tendencies in language pedagogy are not adequately understood and if the national educational priorities and values of language policy and language education of some certain country are not taken into consideration.

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