

Communication Situations as a Means of Verbal Communication Culture Formation in Foreign Language Learning

Vera L. Temkina, Olga M. Osiyanova, Ekaterina Y. Tuchkova, Evgeniya V. Turlova and Anna V. Osiyanova*

Orenburg State University, Orenburg, Russian Federation; ossa15@rambler.ru*, temvl@mail.ru, olos7@rambler.ru, orenkat@yandex.ru, orenburg05@rambler.ru.

Abstract

Background/Objectives: The article is aimed at proving the significance of communicative situations implementation in culture of verbal communication development throughout the process of foreign language learning with high school students. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** The research is based on the complex of theoretical and empirical methods of investigation, pedagogical experiment and statistical procedures. Theoretical methods are: the systematic analysis of Russian and foreign scientific papers, modeling and projecting. Empirical methods included observation, interviewing, questioning and diagnostics. The research had been divided into three parts: diagnostic part, formation experiment and evaluation module. During the formation experiment the effectiveness of communicative situations modeling was checked. **Findings:** The experiment proved the principles of effective communicative situations modeling in culture of verbal communication development throughout the process of foreign language learning. The theoretical analysis together with the experimental part of the research led to the original classification of communicative situations relevant to culture of verbal communication formation according to the participants of communication, content of communication, degree of spontaneity and creativity, according to the goal set, participants' contribution, communication style, degree of controllability, verbal communication reference, ability to generate 'emotional infection'. The research singled out the unequal communication value of different communicative situations and definite correlation between the students' culture of verbal communication and the communicative situations communication value that they choose or create. An important role in modeling communicative situations was played by the students creative and research activities: creating projects, conducting of surveys, disputes and debates, brain-storms and 'round-table' sittings, theme quizzes, contests and role plays, throughout which the students got experience in dealing with the essential tasks while interacting and forming the intercultural communication skills. **Application/Improvements:** The use of the empirical data in competency-based educational process contributes to ensuring a high level of student's culture of verbal communication in any language.

Keywords: Communicative Situations Value, Communication Skills, Culture of Verbal Communication, Personal Development

1. Introduction

Current world situation is being characterized by the deep global culture and civilization changes. Transition from industrial towards information society, has destined the intercultural dialogue as the basis of human understand-

ing, as the top priority in the world integration and as the frame for cross-cultural competence development¹⁻⁶. However, the growing life levels polarity, uncertainty of development perspectives, imposed modus vivendi have led to the emerging of intercultural contradictions and conflicts. The domination of world information

*Author for correspondence

technologies provides unlimited possibilities for the formation of public opinion and mentality.

Thus, knowledge of language means, enabling to affect other people verbally, has become especially relevant. Modern language students are particularly interested in verbal communication as the practical language aspect, which can influence people's behavior, sometimes becoming the instrument of manipulations. Meanwhile, the aim of language learning has mostly remained to be able to understand information on other languages, and does not concern personality development. Here emerges the problem of culture of verbal communication (later CVC), which we regard as the basic component of Humanities students studies within a university.

CVC synthesizes complex world perception, it reflects and activates on a verbal level culturally relevant categories. It is based on a Subject-Subject pattern of personal interrelations, being, barely, an ability to coordinate and correlate one's actions with the other⁷⁻¹⁴.

The analysis of teaching verbal communication in this country and abroad revealed several approaches presented in linguistic, psychological and pedagogical papers: rhetorical, (A. A. Vvedenskaya, A. K. Mikhalskaya, L. G. Pavlova, I. A. Sternin); socio-psychological (E. N. Emelianov, G. A. Kovalyov, L. A. Petrovskaya, E. V. Rudenskiy, A. U. Harash); cultural (V. A. Artyomov, B. N. Golovin, V. V. Kolesov, M. P. Senkevich, V. G. Kostomarov, V. V. Sokolova, S. G. Ter-Minasova, M. O. Faenova, K. N. Khitrik, W. Labov, G. Lakoff) and communicative (I. L. Bim, E. I. Passov, I. L. Pluzhnik, E. N. Solovova, I. I. Khaleeva, C. Brumfit, A. Holliday, W. Littlewood, H. Piepho, J. Sheils, H. G. Widdowson). However the problems of verbal communication culture teaching haven't been solved yet. Quite often the methods and techniques used in educational process have an object-oriented character. They leave aside the subject of communication and its personal development.

The aim of the current study was to determine the role and function of the communication situations (later CSs) in the process of verbal communication culture formation of university students.

2. Materials and Methods

The research held at three universities (Orenburg State University, Orenburg Institute of Moscow Law Academy, Orenburg affiliate of Moscow Technological Institute "WTU") since 2005 through 2013 included theoretical

studies of the problem, experimental part and evaluation module.

The analysis of the theory let us consider CVC as a basic integrative individual formation, which is characterized by a complex of situation mediated processes, connected with verbal activity. CVC helps to realize the competent personality self-development determination¹⁵.

CVC is based on the developing verbal educational situation, which guarantees realization of the following students' requirements: academic and professional needs, personal and status assertions. It facilitates the transition of a student's subjective position throughout cognition activity: from an active performer towards independent verbal activity, thus contributing to the positive attitude towards learning and ensuring work-relating activity success.

As the basic principles of CVC development we regard dialogue of cultures, professional cognitive commitment, positive motivation, and advantageous atmosphere.

The structure of CVC as a basic integrative individual formation is represented in our research by a composition of three culture-forming elements: cognitive, emotive, pragmatic. The cognitive element facilitates systematization of the cognitive processes and helps transform knowledge into personally-oriented thinking. The emotive element is aimed at the formation of value attitude towards CVC and approach to the modern level of social thinking. The pragmatic element is expressed with the development of students' communication activity and formation of verbal communication skills.

Based on the existing classifications of communication skills (following N. Dolgoplova, A. Ksenofontova, N. Yankina), we teased out the following groups of skills, typical for CVC: orientating; analytical; speech; creative; reflexive; techno-informational¹⁵.

We have developed the model of CVC formation by means of communication situations¹⁵⁻¹⁹. This model specifies the goal, content, educational facilities, steps, levels and degrees of CVC maturity. Due to the continuity of educational process we regard CVC formation as a dynamic process and not as a final permanent result.

Experimental part based on application of CSs had taken place from 2005 through 2013. With the help of specially designed Student's Questionnaire we had received written materials from more than 700 students of Orenburg State University (Philology, Journalism and Public Relations faculties), Orenburg Law Academy and Moscow Technological Institute "WTU" (Management

and Economics faculties). An experimental and check groups was selected, a group of experts was determined.

The research as a whole had been divided into three parts:

- Diagnostic part, which had displayed the current state of students' CVC;
- Formation experiment, aimed at the formation of students' CVC by means of CSs, providing effective educational facilities and obtaining the initial results;
- Evaluation module, which showed the changes in the CVC formation levels.

The initial diagnostic part demonstrated that the level of CVC skills varied from 21 % to 43,2 %. At the same time the students were suggested to evaluate themselves. According to the results obtained, the students' self-evaluation generally equaled the one given by the experts in ranks, but differed significantly in the exact figures, thus showing considerable discrepancy in the way the students evaluated themselves and the results of the expertise.

The starting diagnostic part results also revealed the students' insufficient understanding of CVC, low level of reflexive skills, overrated evaluation of their ability to verbal communication.

During the forming part of the experiment, the effectiveness of CS modeling was checked. The selection of education content served here as a meaningful factor. Our main awareness was that of the fact, that while learning a foreign language beyond the scope of the language and cultural surrounding, the authentic text is becoming the main source of extra linguistic information, as being the sample of the native speech. Consequently, apart from the standard course books, learning materials used in CS modeling included authentic course books, newspaper and magazine articles, reports, business papers, extracts from encyclopedias, audio and video materials.

An important role was played by the students creative and research activities: conducting of surveys, disputes and debates, brain-storms and 'round-table' sittings, theme quizzes, contests and role plays, throughout which the students got experience in dealing with the essential tasks while interacting and forming the intercultural communication skills. The key technological element ensuring the interaction of the participants in the teaching-learning process was a communication situation. For developing such situations teachers used means or

actions stimulating students for speech acts, which made them express everything they have learned and realized exciting thoughts, emotions, imagination.

Projects had also been used as one of the key methods of CVC skills formation. The students participated in the selection of the project topics, working together with the teachers of their major subjects: "Interviewing an Idol", "Lap-Top Press Conference", "The World and I", "My Job Reporter", "My Tongue – My Rival?", "Self in Associations". Discussions and role-plays had been used to control the flow and the results of the project tasks. Similarly, interactive trainings and role task cases became effective tools in the CVC formation: "Editorial Meeting", "Meeting Colleagues at an International Conference", "Reporters Day", "Appointment with the Queen".

The CS tasks suggested developing students' creativity, their ability to focus on the main idea, served mastering their communicative skills and expanding their thesaurus, figurativeness and correctness of their speech, ability to understand oral speech and partner's ideas. They learned to put up questions logically and accordingly, to give appropriate and clear answers, to construct their utterances sensibly and correctly.

During the forming part of the experiment we realized a complex of simulated CS aimed at the development of CVC skills. Its implementation was based on the situational dependency of speech (speech as a part of reality).

While modeling CSs, seven steps had been developed within the process: preparation; activity check; participants check; rules and regulations code; communication situations implementation; communication effectiveness check; 'ideal' CS interaction modeling.

3. Results and Discussion

The experiment proved that CS modeling happens to be successful, providing that:

- Communication participants react positively;
- Their behavior is within ethical norms;
- Education content and methods correlate the situation;
- The whole process is aimed at self development.

The theoretical analysis together with the experimental part of our research led to the original classification of CSs relevant to the formation of CVC:

- According to the participants of communication: participants specialty, number of CS participants, compatibility of CS participants;
- According to the content of communication: personally-relevant, professionally-relevant, educational;
- According to the degree of spontaneity: prepared, aided, accidental;
- According to the degree of creativity: standard, with the creative elements, extravagant;
- According to the goal set: informative, affective, interactive;
- According to the participants' contribution: individual, consequential, interacting;
- According to the communication style: culture-stipulated, manipulative, humanistic;
- According to the degree of controllability: controlled, partly controlled; uncontrolled;
- According to verbal communication reference: beneficial to CVC, obstructing CVC, neutral to CVC;
- According to the ability to generate 'emotional infection': effective, medium effective, ineffective.

Questionnaire results, systematic talks to the students and conducted observations approved our supposition about the unequal communication value of different CSs. The observations had additionally shown definite correlation between the students' CVC and the CSs communication value that they choose or create. It helped to divide students into three groups according to the following levels: egocentric, group-centered and humanistic. Thus the students preferring or conducting egocentric CSs demonstrate, as a rule, low CVC level; the students with the medium CVC level prefer group-centered CSs, while the high level CVC students interact effectively in all types of CSs. This made us conclude that CS communication value directly affects the CVC formation by affecting students' subjectivity in verbal communication.

In the course of a forming experiment, Philology and Journalism students of Orenburg State University took part in the Fourth International Language Courses, held within the framework of collaboration project of Universities of Spain, Denmark, Poland, Finland and Russian Federation at Orenburg State University. This part had a form of a project with the application of CSs modeling. Students' creative network project with the general name "Home city presentation" allowed to collect and select materials which later became the foundation for the practical classrooms for the international participants.

Project materials became basic in the course syllabus, which oriented on the mastering of the participants' verbal interaction, development of socio-cultural competence and CVC. At the end of the experiment the final assessment was made. The results helped to estimate the dynamics of students' CVC formation.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study made us conclude that the higher CVC level of the experimental groups in comparison with the check groups owes to the implementation and systematic use of CSs complex.

The further research of the problem discussed in this article can be aimed at the revealing of pedagogical conditions which will guarantee the effective implementation of CSs in CVC formation on different educational levels (kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, colleges, institutes and universities).

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