

## **ПЕДАГОГІКА**

UDC 378.147:811.111

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/53-1-35>

**Tetiana AHIBALOVA,**  
*orcid.org/0000-0003-4612-4845*  
Candidate of Science in Philology,  
Associate Professor at the Department  
of Business Foreign Language and Translation  
National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute"  
(Kharkiv, Ukraine) [tanika.fem@gmail.com](mailto:tanika.fem@gmail.com)

**Nadiia KARPENKO,**  
*orcid.org/0000-0002-9663-9348*  
Candidate of Science in Philology,  
Associate Professor at the Department of Language Training № 1  
Institute of International Education for Study and Research  
of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University  
(Kharkiv, Ukraine) [nkarpenko1983@gmail.com](mailto:nkarpenko1983@gmail.com)

**Nataliia PLOTNIKOVA,**  
*orcid.org/0000-0001-9719-6238*  
Candidate of Science in Philology,  
Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Language  
O. M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv  
(Kharkiv, Ukraine) [nataliplotnikova02@ukr.net](mailto:nataliplotnikova02@ukr.net)

### **INTEGRATION OF AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH INTO THE PROCESS OF MASTERING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

*The article aims to explore the correlation between the intercultural approach and the goals of foreign language education. Based on the findings, this study is to answer the urgent methodology question: how are the components of intercultural competence involved in the process of mastering a foreign language? Its relevance is due to the comprehension that foreign language acquisition involves understanding how the target language and culture relate to one's own language and culture. This means that the focus of the methodology is shifting from the development of communicative competence to the development of intercultural communicative competence.*

*In language, culture is manifested through a system of symbols, which encode national knowledge of history, philosophy, historiography, economy, medicine, and other directions of science. Through a questionnaire, it was found that the processes of language intellectualization are considered as contributing to learners' efficiency due to enrichment with essential knowledge. Though participants, according to results obtained, mostly did not see the benefit in mastering unfamiliar terminology, nevertheless, they reacted more than positively to internationalisms. The study also investigates what impact the participating students' language backgrounds have on their further development/success in education. It is stated that bilingual practices as one of the significant directions in university curriculum allow learners have an advantage over monolinguals naturally.*

*This article also offers a description of a quantitative study of tolerance based on questionnaires completed by students of non-philological faculties. It revealed, firstly, interviewees' understanding and acceptance of foreigners' missayings directly related to the lack of literacy in a target language, and secondly, their to a certain extent disapproving attitude towards missteps associated with cultural ignorance/unawareness.*

**Key words:** *intercultural approach, culture, interaction, bilingualism, language intellectualization, tolerance.*

**Тетяна АГІБАЛОВА,***orcid.org/0000-0003-4612-4845*

кандидат філологічних наук,

доцент кафедри ділової іноземної мови та перекладу

Національного технічного університету

«Харківський політехнічний інститут»

(Харків, Україна) *tanika.fem@gmail.com***Надія КАРПЕНКО,***orcid.org/0000-0002-9663-9348*

кандидат філологічних наук,

доцент кафедри мовної підготовки № 1

Навчально-наукового інституту міжнародної освіти

Харківського національного університету імені В.Н. Каразіна

(Харків, Україна) *nkarpenko1983@gmail.com***Наталія ПЛОТНИКОВА,***orcid.org/0000-0001-9719-6238*

кандидат філологічних наук,

доцент кафедри іноземної мови

Харківського національного університету

міського господарства імені О.М. Бекетова

(Харків, Україна) *nataliplotnikova02@ukr.net*

## ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ПІДХОДУ В ПРОЦЕС ОПАНУВАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

*У статті розглянуто проблему кореляції міжкультурного підходу в навчанні іноземної мови з цілями сучасної іншомовної освіти. На основі отриманих результатів дослідження має відповісти на актуальне питання сучасної методики: яким чином компоненти міжкультурної компетенції залучені в процес оволодіння іноземною мовою? Актуальність розвідки спирається на усвідомлення того факту, що опанування іноземної мови передбачає розуміння механізмів взаємодії цільових мови й культури з власними мовою і культурою. Це означає, що фокус уваги методики зміщується з комунікативної компетенції на міжкультурну комунікативну компетенцію.*

*У мові культура проявляється через систему символів, у яких закодовані національні знання з історії, філософії, історіософії, економіки, медицини й інших напрямів науки. За допомогою анкетування встановлено, що процеси інтелектуалізації мови сприяють підвищенню ефективності навчання за рахунок збагачення мовців новими знаннями. Хоча учасники, виходячи з отриманих результатів, здебільшого не побачили суттєвих переваг у оволодінні незнайомою термінологією, натомість вони більш ніж позитивно відреагували на залучення до активного словника термінів-інтернаціоналізмів.*

*Дослідження також фокусує увагу на тому, який вплив має сформований упродовж попереднього навчання мовний рівень студентів на їхній подальший успіх у здобутті знань. Доведено, що двомовність у освіті в якості одного з найважливіших пріоритетів сучасних університетів визначає шлях до суттєвих переваг білінгвів над монолінгвами, причому природним шляхом.*

*На основі анкетування студентів нефілологічних факультетів у статті також запропоновано кількісний метод для дослідження категорії толерантності упродовж взаємодії з іноземцями. Так, встановлено, по-перше, високий коефіцієнт розуміння й сприйняття респондентами мовних огріхів, що пов'язані безпосередньо з недостатнім рівнем грамотності в цільовій мові, а по-друге, доведено їхнє несхвальне ставлення до помилок, пов'язаних із культурною необізнаністю представників іншої країни.*

**Ключові слова:** міжкультурний підхід, культура, взаємодія, білінгвізм, інтелектуалізація мови, толерантність.

**Problem statement.** International exchange without borders is one of the fastest-growing requirements for higher education in the 21st century. Currently, students communicate across geographical, language, cultural, digital, and educational boundaries, striving to develop independent thinking skills, the ability to critically assess what is happening, and the

ability to find cause and effect relationships, while determining their own place in an ever-changing social space.

The information society requires the introduction of technologies that will ensure interaction with the world by more advanced means. At the same time, an unprecedented flow of information requires effective

approaches to improve communication – both verbal and non-verbal, online and in person, taking place without borders due to the explosive growth of global partnerships, world tourism, and an increase in the number of international projects and business trips. The era of COVID-19, on the one hand, has forced a decision of certain restrictions on live communication, which was previously considered the norm in people's lives. Interaction with numerous potential respondents began to be carried out mainly through unlimited connection and access to the worldwide network. On the other hand, since the communicative behavior of an individual must also adapt to forced conditions, the coronavirus pandemic has strengthened and brought to a new level the importance of communicative understanding and adaptability, which are directly related to the national worldview. This evokes the problem of communication barriers as the feelings of anxiety or doubts people have about something before stating it like judgments about age, gender, religion, behavior, social roles and values, etc. Naturally, this is most evident in the international dialogue. Moreover, improper application of communication models can lead to an inferiority complex, anxiety, and, ultimately, an inability to communicate.

The need for communication without borders whether they are ethnic, professional, age, or religious changes society's priorities, culture, and educational goals. There is an urgent need for graduates who can perceive and interpret fast, think creatively, extract and analyze large amounts of information provided around the world in different languages. Students with a high level of foreign language proficiency expand their horizons of knowledge, immerse themselves in another language space, enrich their vocabulary, evolve various types of memory (short-term, long-term, explicit, implicit, episodic, procedural), and develop better mental abilities. But a lack of understanding of the cultural norms and practices in a multiethnic community can result in misinterpretations or bring unintended results. Therefore, in teaching foreign languages, higher education institutions aim to provide favorable conditions for mastering a target language and support the personal growth of students, introducing them to the traditions of the people whose language they are learning.

Learning a foreign language involves understanding how a target culture relates to one's own culture. In other words, the development of intercultural competence skills is the key to successfully mastering international communication. However, the question of how and to what extent culture should be a part of the foreign language curriculum remains debatable.

**Recent research and publications.** Studies on how language and culture can be mutually integrated are conducted by Arasaratnam, 2005; Hammer, 2003; Daerdorff, 2006; Parmenter, 2003; Greenholz, 2005; Koehn, 2002; Byram, 2003; Stone, 2006. Under their scientific focus, the various aspects of intercultural competence are under analysis. The investigations on how cultural awareness and language learning are inseparable are carried out by Byram, 1997; Byram & Morgan, 1994; Chung & Chow, 2004; Nault, 2006; Alptekin, 2002; Chao, 2009; Sung & Chen, 2009, 2014; Cheng, 2012; Stapleton, 2000; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Zarate, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005. However, these studies discuss the issue from teachers' perspectives while research on students' views in relation to the components of intercultural competence is relatively rare (P. Athanasopoulos).

**The purpose of the article.** The lack of research in this direction is mainly due to the fact that within university groups all students belong to the same cultural space and speak the same language. But the inflow of foreign students into Ukrainian universities makes it possible to observe the principles of interaction in multicultural groups, as well as compare the results of their language and cultural views, obtained using questionnaires and other methods of analysis when working with both them and Ukrainian learners. Thus, this article aims to analyze the intercultural approach as a basis for determining the principles applied for better acquisition of a target language in a multinational community.

**The outline of the main research material.** Passing different stages of development such as the Grammar-Translation-Method in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Audio-Lingual/Audio-Visual Method in the 1940-s, and the Communicative Approach from the late 1970-s, the methodology of FLT has come to the Intercultural Approach since 1980-s, which balanced all the components of the process of effective language teaching, emphasizing the unlimited possibilities for the development of a language personality through foreign cultural enrichment. Thus, Neuner tells about his experience interviewing an 11-year-old boy in 1988, asking him about his impression of an English textbook (Neuner, 2003). The interviewer asked if the learner liked or disliked the book and what differences he saw between families in his country and English families. In answering Neuner's questions, the interviewee was rather critical but did not mention such things as mishaps in grammar or vocabulary. Instead, he criticized the behavior of the characters and commented on their attitude to certain things. This led the scientist to the idea that students perceive learning

material in their own way. «We can never be sure what really captures the attention and interest of students and how they learn» (Neuner, 2003: 36). It turns out that by acquiring teaching material the student receives a fragment of the sociocultural context or, in other words, is involved in the “worldview” of the studied language environment (comparing it with his own, obtained from previous experience), without focusing his attention on the process of gaining knowledge of grammar and vocabulary itself.

Jokikokko defines intercultural competence as «an ethical orientation in which certain morally right ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized» (Jokikokko, 2005). Within the framework of an intercultural model, a foreign language learner is understood as an «intercultural speaker», a person who «crosses frontiers, and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values» (Byram & Zarate, 1997: 11). Having been conscious of how useful is to identify what is important in the context of cultural diversity, most theorists apply an anthropological approach to their models of intercultural competence, considering the individual as the unit of analysis. Just as there is no single valid concept of intercultural competencies, there is no single model capable of measuring these competencies. Each model adopts the concept of intercultural competence according to the context involved. Thus, the model developed by Pascarella (1985) captures the five categories that can directly or indirectly influence students' learning in terms of educational outcomes. These categories include 1) structural and organizational characteristics of educational institutions; 2) student traits such as abilities, personality, aspirations, and ethnicity; 3) interaction with participants in socialization, such as interaction with teachers or peers; 4) institutional environment; 5) the quality of students' efforts (Pascarella, 1985). In this model, the researcher emphasizes the relevance of the mutual influence of the organizational/structural characteristics of the educational institution and the students' traits on each other.

Stated by scientific thought as the classic model, the five-component structure developed by Byram was presented in 1997. This model aims at five factors: 1) Knowledge; 2) Attitudes; 3) Interpreting and relating skills; 4) Discovery and interaction skills; 5) Political education, including critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Instead, Deardorff's model (2006) is set as a visual pyramidal model, where lower levels are considered a prerequisite for achieving higher levels. Unlike other models, here an attempt is made to create the concept of fundamental

elements and an implicit order of skills that ensure effective communication in a multicultural context. In Schnabel's model (2015), the requirements for an intercultural competence measurement scale relate to the following aspects: 1) focus on skills; 2) integration of elements formulated as situations and behavioral alternatives; 3) the opportunity to assess the development of intercultural competencies in different periods of time; 4) independence from a specific cultural context; 5) fewer deviations from existing instruments; 6) compliance with psychometric standards (Schnabel, 2015).

Without setting ourselves the task to analyze the model developed by Byram but summing up the advantages of the other three models, we intend to derive a set of key requirements. First, the process of acquiring skills is a two-way process, where both the motivation and abilities of the learner and the environment in which he finds himself matter. Secondly, it should be focused that obtaining a positive result is achieved on the condition that the correct base is formed. Thirdly, an important component of acquiring intercultural competence is the proper selection of contexts for the proper placement of accents and the possibility of a delayed independent assessment of intermediate and final results.

Those constituents of an intercultural model establish the three systems of intercultural competence measurement. Since learning a language is a method of acquiring symbols and coding systems (and also, a process of acquiring cultural understanding and aptitudes) intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural tolerance are the three key categories referred to a notion of intercultural competence. In previous research we emphasized the significance of intercultural sensitivity as «an individual's ability to develop emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication» (Chen & Starosta, 1997: 5). In this article, we consider it crucial to emphasize intercultural tolerance in its connection with intercultural competence. Based on the results of the survey in the multi-ethnic environment of students, the argumentation of the exceptional importance of tolerance is substantiated. However, it should be noted that all participants (24 students in their 2nd year of learning) belong to the Islamic world since for the sake of the purity of the experiment we did not involve Ukrainian students studying at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The students were presented with a list of two sets of statements regarding their attitude towards foreigners who could commit misdoings and missayings during their intragroup

interactions. With a limited set of responses, respondents were asked questions regarding their reactions to lexical, grammatical, and stylistic errors as well as the behavioral shortcomings of their interlocutors such as: 1. My interlocutor of different cultural background makes lexical mistakes (errors) in their speech. 2. My interlocutor of different cultural background makes grammar mistakes in their speech. 3. My interlocutor of different cultural background makes stylistic mistakes in their speech. 4. My interlocutor of different cultural background makes discourse mistakes in their speech. 5. My interlocutor of different cultural background sees nothing wrong with asking me about my parents and their social life. 6. My interlocutor of different cultural background reveals their political views that are contrary to the course of my own/my country. 7. My interlocutor of different cultural background reveals their religious views that are contrary to my religious identity. 8. My interlocutor of different cultural background sees nothing wrong with discussing my family life. 9. My interlocutor of a different cultural background sees nothing wrong with waving their arms, talking loudly, and pointing fingers at other people. 10. My interlocutor of different cultural background sees nothing wrong with using bad language within our community. The final analysis of the obtained results showed (Figure 1) that the majority of respondents

noted the acceptability of linguistic errors in their native language made by their group mates at the level of 81,6% («Partly appropriate» – 22,5%, «Appropriate» – 48,1%, and «Strongly appropriate» – 11%), and only about a fifth of the students (18,4%) voted negatively («Strongly inappropriate» – 3,7%, «Inappropriate» – 6,5%, «Partly inappropriate» – 8,2%).

In contrast, cultural issues related to religious or political beliefs, family laws or customs, parenting, and relationships with the elderly (Figure 2) were treated more strictly by respondents (31,7% compared to 81,6%) and marked as «Strongly inappropriate» – 7,9%, «Inappropriate» – 21,6%, «Partly inappropriate» – 38,8% (for a total of 68,3%); «Partly appropriate» – 16,1%, «Appropriate» – 10,8%, and «Strongly appropriate» – 4,8% (31,7% in total). This indicates that with a rather high level of general tolerance in their learning environment, a third of students are not ready to be tolerant when it comes to their cultural heritage.

It should be noted that in the process of active learning of a foreign language, the system of acquired language units becomes more complicated, passing through stages from a pure symbol to a phrase, sentence, and, finally, discourse manifestations. It must be stated in this way since awareness of certain vocabulary and grammar/stylistic rules is not used

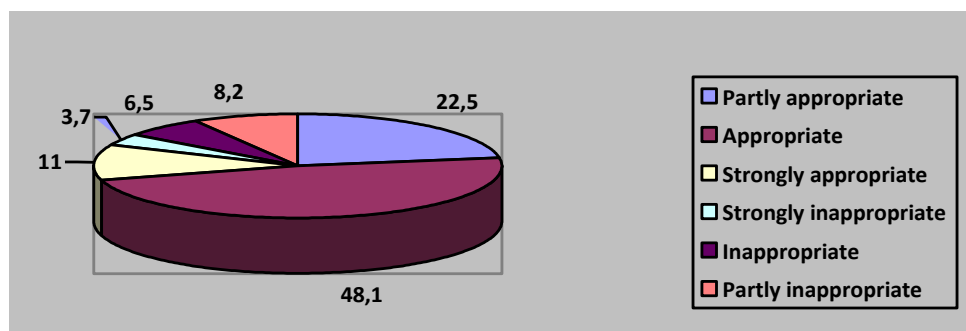


Figure 1

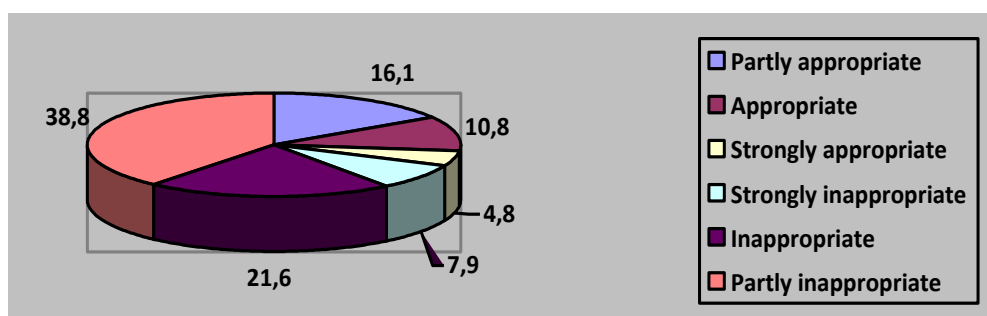


Figure 2

as a means of social interaction. Instead, «important are the skills of communicating with full social and cultural appropriateness» (Byram, 1997), and cultural knowledge enables effective communication whether in a social or professional community. In a situation of language choice, the phase when an individual begins to properly use phrases in a target language identifies the occurrence of attributes of the «secondary» set of skills in their language personality. From this point, an individual begins to be aware of concepts, embodying their personal worldview into social patterns. In other words, they start using language resources encoded in national cultural codes to designate notions in their personal system of values.

This should not mean that we argue that at this stage, learners of a foreign language a priori get rid of the danger of making mistakes. According to our teaching experience, in a state of anxiety or nervous excitement, as well as in a condition of overwork or an unfavorable environment for communication, even a student with a high level of language proficiency is in danger of making mistakes. Moreover, students with intermediate and upper-intermediate levels of language mastery sometimes are at risk of prolonged language plateau. That means they are discouraged and demotivated to continue with language learning for various reasons so cultural knowledge improvement can bring them to a new level of language comprehension and processing.

To prevent students from feeling discouraged and demotivated, teachers use various approaches and means. Based on our pedagogical experience, we must admit that bilingual students (e.g., Chinese-English bilinguals, Arabic-English bilinguals, Ukrainian-English and Ukrainian-German bilinguals) perform better than monolinguals and are rarely disappointed by failures during the acquisition of their target language. Realizing that the identification of pure bilinguals is a task of increased complexity (because, on the one hand, there are different criteria for their identification, and on the other hand, multilateral testing is required for a long time) and since we did not plan to conduct these investigations as a part of our current research, we considered bilinguals the students who had a good command of both languages during classes and interactions with other participants, and obligatorily had high scores in international language exams. As a sign of bilingualism, we also distinguished their ability to quickly and easily switch from Language 1 to Language 2 during in-class conversations. As monolinguals, we considered students who did not use a second language outside the classroom and had problems communicating in that language with the rest of their group during their interactions.

We appreciate that the need for intercultural literacy determines the current curriculum in modern educational institutions. According to researchers, it is due to the fact that «intercultural competence is taught in an implicit way through inclusion in such courses as: British and American Studies, or courses in the culture of English-speaking countries, Sociolinguistics, Varieties of English, Linguistics, Phonetics, English literature, Theory of Education, Folklore Studies, History (Lazar, 2001). Students who acquire as much knowledge and skills in their second language as they have in their first language do better at universities and improve their intellectual ability in general. But universities, which provide their students with bilingual education, win to a greater extent. When several disciplines are taught in a second language, and students receive instruction, for example, in English, this contributes to the development of intercultural competence and expands their brain capabilities. According to psycholinguistic observations, bilingualism does not protect people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease from the same level of damage to the medial temporal cortex as monolinguals, but they function at a better level. According to Ellen Bialystok, this is an advantage: they cope better with the disease (Bialystok, June 2011).

In the 1930-s, Leonard Bloomfield defined bilingualism as the complete control of two languages, as if each were a mother tongue (Bloomfield, 1933). According to this definition, a bilingual speaker is the sum of two monolinguals. The concept of bilingualism has been in the spotlight since the first serious study demonstrating the positive effects of bilingualism was published (Peel and Lambert, 1962). Researchers conducted a fundamental investigation to prove that bilingualism does not interfere with the proper development of the child's psyche and does not spoil children's health. Instead, they found that bilingual children performed better on both verbal and non-verbal tasks.

In 2001, studies of adult bilingualism conducted by Bialystok created a new direction in the psycholinguistic field of this problem. Bilinguals are more successful in identifying and interpreting objects from another culture. This was proved by an experiment conducted on a group of bilinguals and monolinguals by Dr. Athanasopoulos and a group of scientists collaborating with him (Athanasopoulos et al., 2015). The researchers encoded certain words into units of a non-existent language, then the participants were asked to decode the messages contained in these symbols in order to find out their true meaning. The best result was shown by bilinguals

who, according to their affirmatives, did not try to analyze or compare roots and flections, but acted intuitively. Scientists have also proven that bilinguals who speak foreign languages are better and easier to switch from one language to another. Thus, bilingual participants, English-German and German-English, were asked to retell information provided in both languages. It turned out that the interviewees used English to retell a part of the information presented in English and applied German to the German part of the data without delay or hesitation.

With regard to intercultural competence, we have found a significant positive influence of language intellectualization on the process of acquiring a target language. This concept deserves more careful attention in modern scientific society due to its crucial importance for a number of branches of linguistics study, such as Semantics, Stylistics, Terminology, Sociolinguistics, Linguoconceptology, Discourse, Idiostyle, etc. Investigations in this field were conducted in relation to the Ukrainian language as fundamental analysis carried out by Larisa Shevchenko (2002) and to Filipino as scientific research fulfilled by Bonifacio P. Sibayan (1991), Ricardo Ma. Nolasco (2009), Andrew Gonzalez (2010). Research on the role of language intellectualization in the process of developing intercultural competence and, accordingly, in the acquisition of competence in a foreign language has not been conducted at all. We do not want to create the impression that languages need to be artificially developed and intellectualized

in order to create a favorable ground for learning. Instead, we emphasize the idea of choosing texts of particular content and style for the development of effective communication skills and, accordingly, the motivation for further study. Thus, the results obtained through a questionnaire filled out by Ukrainian and foreign students showed a positive impression made on learners by performing various tasks on texts significantly enriched with 1) units that intellectualize language denoting significant information on various fields of study such as business, culture, history, philosophy, information technology, medicine, and law (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 0%, Neither agree nor Disagree – 7,7%, Agree – 30,8%, Strongly agree – 61,5%); 2) terminological units with an unknown meaning (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 8,3%, Neither agree nor Disagree – 33,3%, Agree – 25%, Strongly agree – 33,4%); 3) internationalisms (Strongly disagree – 0%, Disagree – 8,3%, Neither agree nor Disagree – 8,3%, Agree – 33,4%, Strongly agree – 50%). All three categories of units intellectualize language due to their meaning capacity.

The results indicate that the participants consider the 1st and 3rd positions to be essentially significant for the development of language proficiency (Figure 3). But, as for the 2nd statement, regardless of the fact that terms encode knowledge about meaningful areas of people`s lives, they did not attract much attention from students as a means of improving their skills. Moreover, 8.3% of respondents disagreed with this

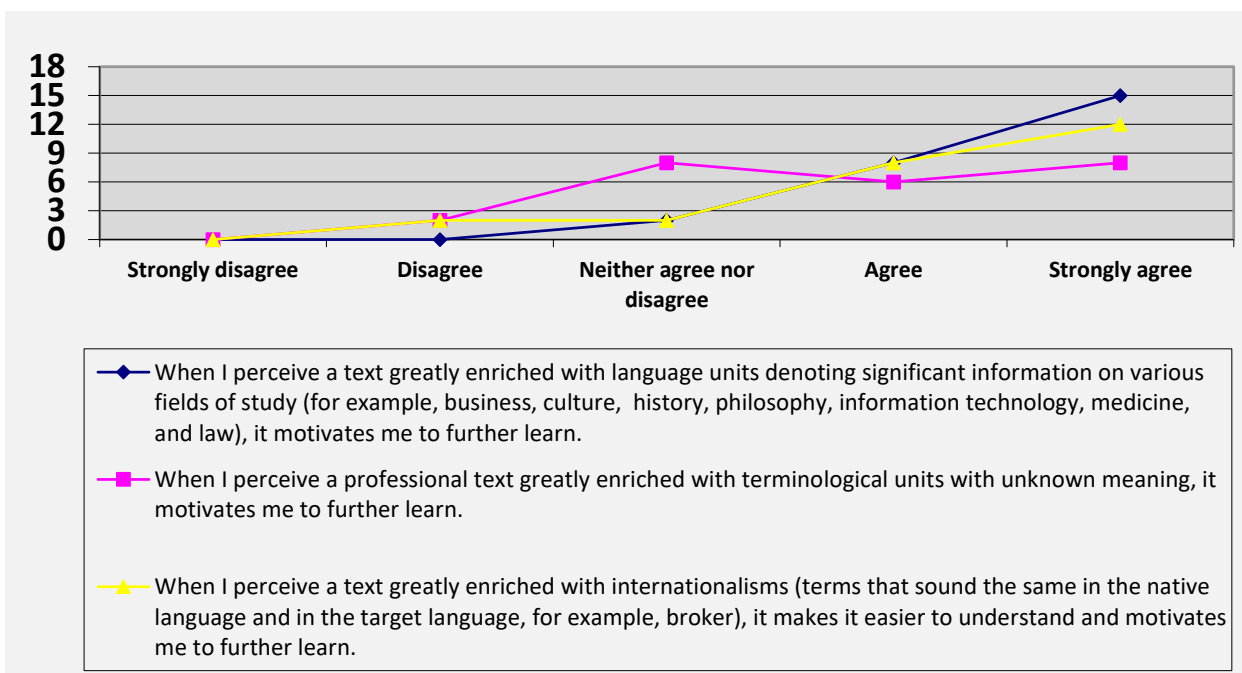


Figure 3

statement, stating that they consider working with unfamiliar terms a somewhat boring task since it takes time to figure out their correct contextual meaning.

**Conclusion.** The process of foreign language acquisition is not passive assimilation of facts, but interaction with the socio-cultural environment where learning takes place. Therefore, culture should always be integrated into the language learning context, and culture learning contributes to the success of language learning. However, the latest studies emphasize the fact that it is no longer relevant to talk about the development of a secondary (third, fourth, etc.) speaker's personality, since he has the potential to develop all these competencies within the framework of one language personality, and this, first of all, depends on his intellectual resource.

That is why the focus of modern foreign language education is shifting from communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence. Analyzing the means of language intellectualization,

we concluded that the survey participants perceive them as contributing to the development of intercultural competence because knowledge and cultural codes manifest through their capacity and significance. The respondents reacted positively to the inclusion of internationalisms as a means of "natural" language intellectualization since they do not require a student to put in a lot of effort to include them in the active vocabulary. We identified bilingualism as one of the most important priorities in modern education, which determines the direction for bilinguals to be in advance of monolinguals in a natural way. The results of processing the questionnaires on tolerance made it possible to conclude that, having treated linguistic errors with understanding, the participants at the same time showed a negative attitude towards errors of cultural content. Since we offered the tolerance test only to students of non-philological faculties, we see the prospect of further research in comparing their answers with the results of philologists.

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