The Formation of Intercultural Competence of Foreign Students by Means of the Russian Language and Literature

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Abstract The historically determined multiculturalism of modern universities, the socio-economic and socio-political changes taking place in Moldova and Russia since the beginning of the 21st century dictate the formation of intercultural competence among students, representatives of different countries and peoples. The purpose of the article is to present the results of a study carried out at the Faculty of Philology of Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University in 2017-2019, and demonstrate specially created psychological and pedagogical conditions that contribute to the formation of a higher and higher quality level of students' ICC, which involves a description of the content-technological support of the developed model and diagnostic tools for measuring the level characteristics of the studied construct. The empirical basis of the study was the results obtained in the course of a three-stage work with students of 1-2 courses studying in the speciality “Russian language and literature, English language” of Creangă PSU, and their meaningful interpretation. The study confirmed the authors' assumption that specially created psychological and pedagogical conditions, which are the introduction of models for the formation of intercultural competence in educational activities, are effective and contribute to the preparation of competent participants in intercultural communication, which in turn will be reflected in both the training of specialists and in the stabilisation of interethnic relations, taking into account the cultural characteristics and interests of each nation living Moldova and Russia. The developed pedagogical model for the formation of intercultural competence among foreign students can become a conceptual basis for the compilation of modern textbooks, teaching and methodological complexes in the Russian language and literature, both for university and pre-university educational institutions. The results of the study are of practical interest for scientists and university professors who are busy with problems of improving the quality of education of modern specialists and, further, the managerial staff of higher educational institutions, heads of departments that constantly monitor the quality of education.

Keywords Intercultural Competence, Dialogue of Cultures, Culture, Russian Language and Literature, Foreign Students, Model, Elective Course, Level
1. Introduction

The increasing flow of foreign students to international universities and their intercultural interaction “mix” national cultures more intensively than before. The most important task of modern education is to develop the skills of students to successfully interact with representatives of other cultures, that is, “properly and effectively respond to requests, challenges and opportunities that arise in intercultural situations” [1]. Of course, this requires the creation of conditions for subjects of the educational process to gain experience in intercultural communication on the basis of mutual understanding. The solution to this problem can be the formation of intercultural competence among students, since it is they who will work with culturally different people, correctly understand their similarities and differences, know and accept their values, traditions and lifestyle, be tolerant of them, affirm with their personal deeds and words, cultural pluralism in society [2].

This article presents the formation of intercultural communication of foreign students by means of the Russian language and literature on the example of students of Creanga SPU (Republic of Moldova), as well as on the review material of the process of training foreign students at MGIMO and the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia. The number of foreign students in Russian universities is growing every year. Today, students from 62 countries study at MGIMO. RUDN University united even more countries – more than 150. This fact means the arrival and “entry” into the university environment of Russian universities of a large number of different cultures and nationalities with their own way of life, traditions, customs, culinary preferences [3].

The project “Russian language as a means of intercultural communication at RUDN University”, carried out from 2018 to 2019, was aimed at strengthening and expanding the possibilities of using the Russian language as a means of interethnic communication, improving the quality of in-depth knowledge of the Russian language, given that many disciplines are taught at RUDN University in Russian. Within the framework of the project, numerous events were held that made students interested in learning the Russian language. Meanwhile, teachers noted problems in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Numerous proposals and recommendations were made on their solution and consideration in the implementation of subsequent projects.

Since 1946, MGIMO has been providing professional training to international students – future specialists in the field of the international profile. The main task of the Russian language department is the language training of foreign students. Since 1999, the department is a member of the Russian Society of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature, which allows it to be in a single information space that unites all the leading Russian experts in the field of Russian language and literature and to actively work in scientific cooperation with foreign colleagues. The teachers of the Russian language department of MGIMO note the special importance of teaching foreign students the language of the speciality, therefore, creative teams have been created at the department to study the features of the language of professional communication [4-7].

The Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University, founded in 1940, is also no less diverse in its national palette, where representatives of various nationalities are studying. That is, today Creanga SPU, MGIMO and RUDN University, like other international universities, turned out to be included in intercultural, international processes and contacts of representatives of different cultures, which, of course, have a high potential for international solidarity aimed at cultural mutual enrichment. By the example of the presented universities, with multinational student groups, the Russian language, as one of the official languages of the UN, plays the role of an important mediator connecting the bridge between different traditions, customs, and faiths.

The question of the formation of intercultural competence of students in universities where foreign students study is a legitimate one, due to the historical multiculturalism of countries, the socio-economic and socio-political changes taking place in Moldova and Russia since the beginning of the 21st century. In modern pedagogy, there is a strong opinion that the formation of intercultural competence can be carried out mainly in the framework of linguistic training in the study of foreign languages. In this regard, the principle of “culture through language” is traditionally laid at the heart of the process of its formation, including through the hidden content of education [8]. However, today it is becoming obvious: “knowing what the other person is saying and understanding her is not the same thing, and the technical absence of a language barrier is not a way to overcome the cultural barrier” [9]. In this regard, the assumption of modern scholars that the successful formation of intercultural competence is possible and even preferable in the study of fiction deserves special attention. Moreover, there is an opinion that the process of studying literature should turn into intercultural education and training. In other words, the implementation of the goal – the formation of intercultural competence of foreign students – is possible when studying the Russian language and Russian literature.

The exceptional importance of studying the Russian language and literature in the intercultural interaction for the population of Moldova is determined by the following judgments. On the one hand, in the republic, the Russian language and Russian literature are non-native for representatives of national minorities, just as the literature of the titular nation is non-native. As the doctor of historical sciences E.V. Ratseeva rightly notes, Moldovan
citizen, Bulgarian by nationality is (most often) a student of a school with the Russian language. For him, native literature is Bulgarian, and Russian, Romanian (Moldavian), as well as other, are non-native [10]. Consequently, for the representatives of the national minorities of Moldova themselves, their literature is their native language, and the Russian language is non-native, foreign. On the other hand, an important factor in this aspect is the functioning of the Russian language in the territory of Moldova. This is due to the fact that historically a specific linguistic situation has been created in the republic: Moldovan-Russian bilingualism is the main communication tool in our multinational country, which allows Russian-speaking citizens of Moldova not only to integrate into Moldovan society, but also to preserve their cultural identity.

One of the main and basic properties of a language is its universality, which allows realizing not only intra-cultural but also intercultural communication. This feature of the Russian language is implemented in the context of intercultural interaction between Moldavian universities and Russian universities. Despite the fact that in Moldova, the Russian language is officially deprived of the status of a language of interethnic communication, de facto this is a language through which representatives of different nationalities can freely interact with each other [11]. It is taught in pre-university educational institutions with the Romanian language of education; in many schools, gymnasiums, lyceums of the republic (20%), education is in Russian. The Russian-speaking part of the country's population, which includes not only ethnic Russians, but also Ukrainians, Gagauz, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Gypsies, etc., uses the Russian language as equally understandable and equally accessible to communicate with each other as official (in state institutions, educational institutions, services, at work, etc.) and unofficial (in public places, transport, on the streets, etc.). The Russian language is also popular among the titular population – Moldavians (only 1% of the population does not know Russian at all). Moreover, for representatives of national minorities, the Russian language acts as a second along with the language of their nationality. Many of them do not know any other language than Russian. Obviously, for all of them, the Russian language is the only one that unites them. Thus, the Russian language is a means of building intercultural interaction.

In this context, the study of the Russian language and Russian literature will contribute, firstly, to the formation of a person who is ready to become a fully-fledged subject of intercultural communication. Secondly, to build a dialogue of cultures of ethnically different people living in the same territory and in the same historical time, which is of particular importance in a multinational and multicultural state, such as the Republic of Moldova. In light of the foregoing, it is equally important that the spiritual needs of Russian-speaking residents of the country are largely oriented towards Russia and connected with it [12]. Moreover, in Moldova, the strength of the influence of the Russian language and Russian culture as a whole is explained not by the number of the Russian-speaking population, but by other, long-term, deep and stable phenomena and processes: the cultural life of Bessarabia in the 19th century. For more than a century, it developed in the Russian context, was built on samples of Russian culture [13], in the 20th century, Moldova was a part of the Soviet Union and the life of the peoples inhabiting it was also associated with the Russian world and Russian values. The Russian language in Moldova has always served as a conductor of the achievements of world science and culture. This determined its high status in the minds of Moldovans. Thus, participation in the Russian world becomes the support on which it is possible to build effective intercultural communication between representatives of different nationalities in Moldova and on the basis of this achievement of their spiritual and cultural unity.

Russian culture, which largely shapes the worldview, as philologists rightly point out, has been known and is known through fiction [14]. In a literary work, the main medium of cultural information and the spokesman of national mentality is language. Moreover, exactly in the art form language has the ability to be realised in its entirety. It is also indisputable that a deep comprehension of literary works is impossible without appropriate knowledge of the language. Therefore, the Russian language is a basic component in the study of Russian literature. At the same time, as noted above, the functioning of the Russian language and literature is important not only for the Russian-speaking communicative space in the republic, but also for building a dialogue of cultures. In this regard, the most important function of the Russian language and literature as unifying the multinational population of the Republic of Moldova is highlighted – this is the function of intercultural communication. Consequently, the study of the Russian language and Russian literature as parts of Russian culture will contribute to the successful formation of intercultural competence of foreign students and the subsequent building of intercultural dialogue between representatives of all nationalities living in Moldova.

At the same time, according to modern researchers, a complete concept for the preparation of competent participants in intercultural communication is not yet available [15]. The question of how to practically implement this process also remains open. In this regard, the research problem is formulated, which is also the goal of the work. This is the answer to the question “How to ensure the effective formation of intercultural competence of foreign students of Moldovan universities by means of the Russian language and literature?” As part of the study of the problem of the formation of the ICC of future
specialists, the authors pose the research questions for the first time: a) determination of the theoretical and methodological justification and clarification of the concept of the ICC; b) development of substantive and technological support for the formation of the ICC of foreign students by means of the Russian language and literature; c) the introduction into the educational process of a model for the formation of the studied competence through the method of experiment.

The article proposes special psychological and pedagogical conditions that ensure the formation of a higher and more qualitative level of international students’ ICC through the introduction of the course “Russian language and literature through a prism of a national character ”, including an innovative and comprehensive methodology for studying the Russian language and literature, as well as training for playing out intercultural situations and case studies using audio-visual and interactive technologies, which together were effective prognostic tools that promotes the formation of the ICC among international students. This study is devoted to the development and implementation of a model for the formation of the ICC of foreign students by means of the Russian language and literature, for which the structural-component composition of the studied construct (cognitive, communicative-activity, and value-emotional components) was initially determined. The obtained results confirmed the authors' hypothesis that specially created psychological and pedagogical conditions, the development and implementation of a model, and the author’s elective course contribute to the formation of a higher and higher-quality level of international students’ ICC.

2. Literature Review

The concept “intercultural competence” entered the scientific discourse in the early 1970s, when intercultural communication was developing as an independent scientific field. Intercultural competence is formed in the process of mastering a particular type of communication – intercultural communication, which is regarded as “a process of communication and interaction between representatives of different cultures or cultural communities” [16]. One of the key concepts in the theory of intercultural communication is the concept of “dialogue of cultures”, the interpretation of which is widely represented in the philosophy and history of culture [17, 18], literary criticism and semiotics [19, 20], linguistics [21] and pedagogy [22, 23]. The central importance of dialogue in culture and the special role of the polyphony of cultures were confirmed in their works by the Russian philosopher, culturologist, theorist of European culture and art M.M. Bakhtin [19]. The ideas of the scientist were deepened and expanded by V.S. Bibler [22], who has laid the dialogue of cultures at the core of his pedagogical system. Scientists are unanimous in that “the dialogue understood in the idea of culture is <<...>> always a dialogue of different cultures” [24]; cultural identity is revealed only in dialogue; through dialogue mutual understanding can be achieved.

The dialogue of cultures acts as the main characteristic of the modern education system. The concept of intercultural dialogue is one of the theories on the basis of which an analysis of modern trends in the development of pedagogy of higher education [25] is possible, which are aimed at the formation of means, conditions and mechanisms of personality self-awareness. Introducing students to the dialogue of cultures is very important from the point of view of their education and upbringing, since “the formation of a person of culture, a person of spirituality always occurs due to the dialogue of cultures” [23]. At the same time, the dialogue of cultures is a means of forming and developing intercultural competence. Intercultural competence as a subject of scientific understanding is widely represented in the research of modern scientists: Western [26], Russian [16, 27-30] and Moldavian [9, 31, 32].

According to the pedagogical tradition, in the framework of vocational training, the formation of intercultural competence is carried out in the context of linguistic disciplines, that is, language education, with an artistic text playing the supporting role [16, 21, 28, 29, 33]. However, modern studies show that for the formation of intercultural competence, the literary work is the beneficial material, since the literary text of the national literary work is a “capacitor of cultural memory” [20]. The analysis of a literary text as a means of creating intercultural competence is considered by few scholars, including Ibragimova [34], Tokareva [35], Fedotova [36], Zaikovski [37], Tswik [9] and others. However, it should be noted that currently there is a lack of research in which the intercultural competence of foreign students would be formed by means of the Russian language and literature.

Thus, despite the impressive list of domestic and foreign studies on the problem of the formation of intercultural competence in higher education, its degree of development is not fully presented. It can be stated that a) there is no unified structural-component composition of the studied construct; b) the theoretical aspects are insufficiently studied and the practical aspects of the formation of the ICC in general and in the study of the Russian language and literature, in particular, are not fully represented; c) the substantive and technological support of the process of the formation of the ICC has not been developed, which can significantly change its effectiveness and involve the pedagogical and educational and didactic potential of the university; d) a complete understanding by foreign students of the need for an ICC in their professional luggage has not been achieved [38].
3. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted on the basis of the philological faculty of the Creanga State Pedagogical University of the Republic of Moldova. The control and experimental groups were formed from first- and second-year students studying in the speciality “Russian language and literature. English language” (curriculum code according to the list of areas of vocational training and specialities in higher education RM 0114.9/0114.10). When selecting parallel groups of subjects, the requirements of sample uniformity were taken into account. The methodology for the formation of the ICC of foreign students includes three stages. At the first, ascertaining stage, students of the EG and CG participated in identifying the initial level of the IWC.

At the second, formative stage, students of the CG were involved in the educational process for the study of pedagogical disciplines, in accordance with the curriculum of Creanga SPU. Students of EG at the formative stage were included, in addition to the specified educational process, in specially organised conditions for the formation of the ICC by means of the Russian language and literature. The third, control, stage was carried out by analogy with the first, that is, students from both groups were involved in it. At the first stage, to identify the initial levels of each of the components (cognitive, communicative-active, and value-emotional) of the ICC, the following were used:

1. The author's “Diagnosics of intercultural erudition of students”, which is a questionnaire consisting of 60 statements with which respondents could agree or not. Interpretation of results: for each correct answer 1 point was assigned, for statements No. 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 39, 40, 45, 47, 48, 50, 53, 55, 57, 58 the correct answer was “yes”, for the others – “no”. The more the student scored, the higher the level of his intercultural erudition.

2. The “Written interview” questionnaire, which includes 6 questions that were aimed at identifying students' knowledge gained from the Russian language and literature, that is, signs of national cultural life, manifestations of a Russian character, motivation of the elements and decisions of the author expressing Russian identity and etc. According to the instructions, the subjects had to independently give complete detailed answers, each of which was evaluated from 0 to 3 points.

3. Self-assessment questionnaire “Intercultural communication skills”, in which respondents were asked to rate these statements on a five-point scale, depending on the degree of their agreement/disagreement or the severity of their stated qualities. Depending on the number of points scored (significance indicators were summed up), the level of demonstrated skills was determined.

4. A test by the method of diagnostic cards, which allowed not only to accurately identify the skills that a student is able to demonstrate in the process of interaction with representatives of other cultures, but also to assess his ability to cope with intercultural situations. Assessment of the test results was carried out according to a specially developed scale for the analysis of diagnostic cards, in which the severity of the seven parameters was determined in numerical indicators from 0 to 5 points.

5. The methodology for diagnosing the level of empathic abilities of V.V. Boyko, the peculiarity of which is that its use allows to measure not only the level of empathy of respondents, but also the settings that promote or impede it. The methodology consists of 36 statements with which respondents should either agree or not. The total score is determined on the basis of counting the number of answers corresponding to the “key”. The higher the total score, the higher the level of empathic abilities of the respondent.

6. The modified and adapted methodology “Value Orientations” by M. Rokich, which is associated with the study of the system of value orientations of foreign students, since it determines the content side of the personality’s orientation, forms the basis of her relationship to the world, to other people, to itself, her worldview foundation, life concept, “philosophy of life”, the core of the motivation of life activity. The technique is based on direct ranking of the list of terminal and instrumental values. Its advantage is versatility, convenience and cost-effectiveness in conducting research, processing results, as well as flexibility – the ability to vary stimulus material (lists of values). Students were provided with two lists of values arranged in alphabetical order, and instrumental values were presented as important for building an intercultural dialogue. Respondents should distribute the values in each group in order of their importance to them as the principles, by which they are guided in life, and assign a rank number (from 1 to 9) to each value.

7. Situational modelling “Rearrangement of roles”, involving the creation of a situation in which a participant in the educational process can gain real sensory experience, emotionally experience the state of representatives of a different culture, experience one or another of their roles. In this case, the basic principle was the answer to the question “What do I feel in a situation of a hero?” Students received a task, for the assessment of which a special scale was developed with 10 parameters, each of which was evaluated by an expert group from 0 to 5 points.

The procedure for processing the results was carried out by calculating the algebraic sum of points scored by each
foreign student. To distribute the results obtained at the appropriate levels (basic, intermediate, advanced), we used the three-level diagnostic technique proposed by L. Mitina and E.S. Askomovets, according to which the coefficient of 0.45 is assigned to the upper boundary of the base level and 0.75 to the upper boundary of the middle level. To determine the boundaries of the levels, the formulas were used: \[ U_1 = \Sigma_{\text{min}} + (\Sigma_{\text{max}} - \Sigma_{\text{min}}) \cdot 0.45; \]
\[ U_2 = \Sigma_{\text{min}} + (\Sigma_{\text{max}} - \Sigma_{\text{min}}) \cdot 0.75, \]
where \( U_1 \) and \( U_2 \) are quantitative indicators of the upper boundaries of the base and middle levels; \( \Sigma_{\text{min}} \) and \( \Sigma_{\text{max}} \) – the minimum and maximum possible total points for the block.

The results of the data obtained at the first stage for both groups of students (control and experimental) showed a certain similarity in the levels of ICC for them, and most of the respondents demonstrated compliance with the basic level, which is insufficient for successful interaction in a multicultural society. This led to the need to create special conditions for the experimental group that could, in the future, increase the level of ICC among international students. In this regard, at the second stage, as the main technology contributing to the formation of a higher level of the ICC of foreign students, an elective course “Russian language and literature through the prism of a national character” was introduced, which included an innovative methodology for studying Russian literature, trainings for playing intercultural situations (“Constellation of cultures”, “How and why?”, “Through time and space”, “Getting into dialogue”), case studies using audio-visual and interactive technologies (“Original Russian issues”, “Method of solution”, “Position”, “Emotions or rationality”, “But am I not Russian myself?”).

It is worth noting that the students of the control group during the experiment studied according to standard programs in accordance with the LAVTS HE (list of areas of vocational training and specialities in higher education) (0114.9/0114.10) and did not participate in the formative stage, were not placed in special conditions as students of the experimental group, which made it possible to further compare their results with the results of the experimental group. At the third stage, using the same methods as at the first stage, a diagnosis was made of the level of formation of intercultural competence of foreign students participating in the experiment, which allowed a comparative analysis of the results obtained. To visualise the results obtained, tabulation methods and diagrams were used. In the framework of the comparative analysis, the obtained final results of identifying the levels of ICC formation in foreign students of the experimental and control groups were correlated with the data of the ascertaining stage. This made it possible to fix a quantitatively and qualitatively higher level of ICC among foreign students of the experimental group at the control stage.

4. Results and Discussion

Theoretical and methodological analysis determined the strict logic of the study in the form of modelling the four-stage process of the formation of the ICC of foreign students, which is interconnected and interdependent blocks (Fig. 1).

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**Figure 1.** Model of the process of formation of intercultural competence of international students

- **The State order for a modern specialist**
- **Modern requirements:** National Qualifications framework, Curricula of universities, Curriculums
- **Theoretical and methodological unit**
  - structural-component composition (components: cognitive, communicative-activity, value-emotional)
- **Ascertaining unit**
- **Forming unit**
- **Final unit:** the confirmation of the effectiveness of the proposed technologies

**Approaches:** competence, systemic, activity-oriented, personality-oriented, cultural, intercultural

**Methods:** system analysis, modeling, synthesis, comparative analysis, questioning, testing
4.1. Theoretical and Methodological Unit

The first unit of the model assumed a theoretical justification of the essence and content of the main subject of the study — “intercultural competence of foreign students”; the development of its structural-component composition. To understand the degree of development of this problem, a theoretical and methodological study was conducted in the field of pedagogy, intercultural education, literary criticism: the theory of intercultural communication [39]; intercultural competence [26-30]; the specifics of the educational activity of a teacher in a multicultural environment [40] the theory of dialogue of cultures [19, 22, 28]; the concepts of a secondary linguistic personality [29, 41] and intercultural personality [9, 30]; theories and methods of forming intercultural competence [29, 30]; methods of analysis of a literary text as a means of forming intercultural competence [9, 34-36].

Clarification of the content of the concept of “intercultural competence” directly affects the transforming stage of research and its content, selection and implementation of technologies. After analysing an impressive number of works, we came to the conclusion that studies of intercultural competence take place in different areas of scientific and humanitarian knowledge and are often interdisciplinary in nature. Despite the fact that today this concept is one of the most frequently used in scientific pedagogical literature, many researchers put different contents into it. In accordance with this, there is still no single definition of intercultural competence, which is explained by the multidimensionality, versatility of this concept, as well as differences in the author's approaches to its study.

An analysis of the definitions presented in the scientific literature allows drawing the following conclusion. Intercultural competence is the ability of a person to understand and accept a foreign culture and, on the basis of this, achieve successful interaction in a multicultural society and mediate between one’s own culture and the interlocutor’s culture — a mediator of cultures, while preserving their own identity. It is based on a cognitive basis – knowledge of the specifics of cultures, their differences and the characteristics of their interaction — in conjunction with a complex of skills to discover, absorb and use this knowledge, as well as value relationships based on openness, respect, tolerance, empathy, emotional mood to overcome different kind of prejudices and stereotypes.

Clarification of the concept of “intercultural competence” allowed coming to the conclusion that the structural component of the intercultural competence of a foreign student includes three components: cognitive knowledge, communicative-active and value-emotional. Each of them reveals the essence of intercultural competence in a certain aspect [42]. The first reflects its normative basis, the second fixes the personality’s ability to solve typical and non-standard tasks of intercultural interaction, the third is meaning-forming, and its functioning provides a combination of cognitive-knowledge and communicative-active personality traits into a single whole. Moreover, the presence of individual links in this system cannot guarantee the effective implementation of the goals of intercultural communication. A truly successful intercultural interaction and understanding are possible only if all components of intercultural competence are integrated.

4.2. Ascertaining Unit

This unit was supposed to identify the initial level of formation of intercultural competence of foreign students in the control and experimental groups, the content of which is represented by three components: cognitive, communicative-active and value-emotional. To identify the level of the cognitive component, we used the “Diagnostics of intercultural erudition of students” and the “Written interview” questionnaire, which were specially developed by the authors for this study. As a result, it was found that 52% of students in the EG and 31% in the CG completed the tasks according to the criteria of the basic level of the cognitive component of the ICC, 30% of the respondents in the EG and 46% in the CG completed the tasks at a middle level, and 18% in the EG and 23% in the CG found knowledge corresponding to advance the level of this component ICC.

The level of the communicative-active component of the ICC was determined through a self-assessment questionnaire “Intercultural communication skills” and testing using the diagnostic card method. After processing the data of the measuring materials, we obtained the following results. The basic level of the studied component of the ICC was found by 79% of foreign students in the EG and 71% in the CG; results corresponding to the middle level showed 15% in the EG and 26% in the CG; skills corresponding to an advanced level in the EG were demonstrated by 6% of the subjects, and in the CG 3%.

In order to identify the level of the value-emotional component, we used V.V. Boyko’s Method for diagnosing the level of empathic abilities, M. Rokich’s “Value Orientations” methodology and “Rearrangement of roles” situation modelling. The conjugate application of these methods allowed to record the following results. The basic level in the EG is 64% of future specialists and 57% in the CG; medium – 27% in the EG and 31% in the CG; advanced – 9% in the EG and 11% in the CG. For greater clarity, we used the tabulation method, placing the results in a table (Table 1).
The determination of the levels of intercultural competence in general among foreign students in the EG and CG was carried out by calculating the algebraic sum of points scored by each student and distributing the results obtained at the appropriate levels, the boundaries of which were determined using the method of L. Mitina and E. Askomovets [43]. We demonstrated the identified levels using the method of diagrams (Fig. 2).

![Levels of formation of intercultural competence of international students EG and CG in the initial stage](image)

### Table 1. Indicators of the level of formation of components of intercultural competence among international students of the EG and the CG at an ascertaining stage of 100%

| Levels   | Components of intercultural competence among international students | Cognitive | Communicative-active | Value-emotional |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|
|          | EG | CG | EG | CG | EG | CG |
| Basic    | 52 | 31 | 79 | 71 | 64 | 57 |
| Middle   | 30 | 46 | 15 | 26 | 27 | 31 |
| Advanced | 18 | 23 | 6  | 3  | 9  | 11 |

4.3. Forming Unit

This unit suggested the introduction of the elective course “Russian language and literature through a prism of a national character”, which includes an innovative methodology for studying the Russian language and Russian literature, trainings for playing intercultural situations, case studies using audio-visual and interactive technologies. The concept of the course was based on the following provisions:

1. The literary text is considered as a source of culture, an expression of the national character and mentality of the people.

2. Cultural components bearing a specific national colouring are presented in the content of the literary text.

3. The study of literary text and work with it contain great potential and a wide field for activities aimed at the formation of intercultural competence of students.

Processing a work of art is implemented using an innovative methodology for studying Russian literature. It includes a detailed methodological apparatus, reflecting the stages of work, its features and sequence, offering a system of exercises, tasks, questions, various techniques and methods aimed at identifying, perceiving, understanding and comprehending the national-cultural component of the studied works. The course content includes:

- Topic 1. An artistic text as a unit of national-cultural discourse reveals a) the basic concepts of national culture, including those used in the study of works; b) the concept of Russian national culture; c) the history of the formation of the Russian national character and its features.

- Theme 2. National world and Russian character in the novel by A. S. Pushkin “The Captain's Daughter” (analysis of a passage of the work using the specified methodology).

- Theme 3. Novel of M. Yu. Lermontov “Hero of our time” – a look at “The Other” (Chapter “Bela”) (viewing and analysis of a fragment of the film “Hero of our time”, directed by Alexander Kott, 2006).

- Theme 4. The study of the national-cultural component of the novel by I. S. Turgenev “Fathers and Sons” (case studies based on chapter X: “Original Russian issues”, “Solution”, “Position”, “Emotions or rationality”, “But am I not Russian myself?”).

- Theme 5. The specifics of the national-cultural approach to the study of Russian literature on the example of the story of Leo Tolstoy's “Prisoner of the Caucasus” (dramatisation in the work).

- Topic 6. The literary text is a source of culture, an exponent of national character and mentality (cognitive training “Constellation of cultures”, training of attribution “How and why?”, Behavioural training “Through time and space”, situational training “We enter into dialogue”).

4.4. Final Unit

This unit was to identify the final results of the formed intercultural competence among foreign students of the experimental and control groups and confirm the effectiveness of the proposed elective course. To do this, we turned to the same techniques that were used at the initial stage. Counting the scores for the cognitive-knowledge component, a slightly different picture is obtained: at an advanced level, students of the EG now showed higher rates than students of the CG, which amounted to 58% and 20%, respectively, at middle level – 33% and 57%, at the basic level – 9% and 23%.
When comparing the data of the initial and final stages, it was recorded that in the EG the number of foreign students with an advanced level increased by 40%, and the basic level decreased by 43%.

A change in the indicators of the communicative-active component was also recorded. The number of foreign students who demonstrated proficiency in the advanced level of the studied component was 30% in the EG and 0% in the CG, at the middle level 48% of respondents in the EG and 34% in the CG completed the tasks, at the basic level – 21% in the EG and 66% in KG. In the EG advanced level: + 24%, average: + 33%. The identification of the value-emotional component made it possible to note that the number of students with an advanced level of this component increased in the EG by 21% and amounted to 30%, and in the CG by 3%, which amounted to 14%. Also, in the EG, the number of those who showed results corresponding to the average level increased by 15%, and this amounted to 42%, while in the CG this indicator was 34%, which is only 3% more than at the ascertaining stage. The number of those who demonstrated the basic level in the EG decreased by 37% and amounted to 18% (against the previous 55%), which is 31% lower than in the CG. We clearly presented the dynamics of indicators of the levels of formedness of the ICC of foreign students in the EG and CG in the diagram (Fig. 4).

As part of a comparative analysis of the results obtained at the initial and final stages, a quantitatively and qualitatively higher level of MCC was recorded for foreign students of the experimental group at the final, final stage of the study.

5. Conclusions

The conducted study confirmed the authors' assumption that specially created psychological and pedagogical conditions, which are the introduction of the model for the formation of intercultural competence in educational activities, significantly improved the result, testifying to its effectiveness and efficiency. The formative stage is an important stage in the introduction of the elective course “Russian language and literature through the prism of a national character”. It was an effective predictive tool for the formation of intercultural competence of foreign students of universities of the Republic of Moldova.

A comparison of the results with the comparative method within the framework of one group – experimental or control – allowed drawing the following conclusion. If the results recorded in the CG at the final stage do not differ much from those obtained at the ascertaining one (the base level indicator decreased by 2% and increased by 3% for the average), then in the EG there was a significant change in the indicators. So, at the final stage in the ER, 27% of students showed compliance with the advanced level of the ICC against 6% at the ascertaining stage, which is 21% more, while the basic level is fixed at 18% against 55%, which is 37% less. The number of students who completed the tasks at an average level also increased: 55% versus 39%, that is, 16%. The data
presented demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed mechanisms for achieving the goal and solving the research problems and prove the productivity of the proposed psychological and pedagogical conditions.

The mechanisms and phased implementation of the model can be reproduced in wide university practice by teachers aimed at increasing the level of intercultural competence among foreign students. The developed pedagogical model for the formation of intercultural competence of students can become a conceptual basis for the compilation of modern textbooks, teaching and methodological complexes in the Russian language and literature, both for university and pre-university educational institutions. The research materials can be used both in the teaching of the Russian language and literature at various faculties of universities, as well as in continuing education courses, in the work of methodological seminars. The results of the study are of practical interest for scientists and university professors who are engaged in problems of improving the quality of education of modern specialists and, further, the managerial staff of higher educational institutions, heads of departments that constantly monitor the quality of higher education.

The study does not exhaust all the issues related to the formation of intercultural competence and students of universities of the Republic of Moldova. Promising areas of further scientific research in the field of study should focus on deepening the intercultural component of vocational training of graduates, capable of ensuring the formation of personality, ready to actively interact with representatives of other cultures and able to successfully carry out professional activities in a multicultural environment.

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