

University Students' Multicultural Linguistic Personality Formation in the Process of Learning a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The article extends the relevance of multicultural education, contributing to the formation of students' intercultural thinking and social stability, morality and humanity, practical ability to apply the acquired knowledge and to live in a transforming society. Knowledge of a foreign language and other cultures is an indispensable condition for the effectiveness of multicultural education. The prime objective of a foreign language education today is multicultural linguistic personality formation. The term 'multicultural linguistic personality' is closely related to the concepts of "multicultural personality" and "linguistic personality". The article examines the rationale and implementation of a new approach to foreign language teaching, aimed at multicultural linguistic personality formation. Judicious deployment of blended learning (BL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in a foreign-language educational process not only contributes to cross-cultural understanding and linguistic diversity but also encourages students' self-regulated learning and interactive collaboration. The objective was to identify and analyse the possibilities of students' multicultural linguistic personality formation in a private university in Tokyo. An intercultural language teaching (ILT) model was designed in order to develop students' intercultural competence (IC), which is directly linked to multicultural linguistic personality formation. The study proves the effectiveness of the developed ILT model, whereby the students significantly improved their foreign language skills, developed a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other cultures, involving appropriate behaviour that respects other people as well as the diversity of their opinions, and enhanced their communication skills necessary for successful intercultural communication.

Key words

multicultural linguistic personality, foreign language, intercultural competence, blended learning.

1 Introduction

Globalisation and integration processes, as well as socio-cultural phenomena of the modern world, set challenging tasks for education to educate a new type of

personality, a competitive, morally mature person, capable of creative thinking and working in a multicultural world. Today the processes of modernisation of education are aimed at the interaction of the educational system with the representatives of science, culture and economy, at increasing the importance of dialogue between cultures, traditions, customs, religions, etc.

An analysis of the theoretical literature has led to the conclusion that globalisation necessitates a revision of approaches to foreign language teaching precisely in the context of the multicultural linguistic orientation. The problem of multicultural education interests many researchers. Each of the existing definitions given by scientists claims to fully disclose its essence, emphasising different sides of this multifaceted phenomenon. Evidence of the multifaceted nature of the new global culture can be found in the studies of American sociologist Berger and political scientist Huntington. Initially, they based their assumption on the fact that globalisation led to unification of cultures. Berger noted that the term “globalization” evokes a very emotional attitude. According to Berger, some people see it as a harbinger of international civil society, the beginning of a new era of peace and democratisation. For others, globalisation means economic and political hegemony of the United States, which will lead to a homogenisation of culture across the world. Berger himself admitted that the results of the study made him change his outlook on globalisation. The study showed that there is no unification. Global culture does not destroy a national culture but on the contrary, it contributes to its more conscious identification. In response to globalisation, the world has become more conscious and careful about preserving its diversity (Berger & Huntington, 2002). Globalisation is exacerbating the situation of a multicultural world, requiring urgent solutions for effective cooperation between different cultures, which in turn poses new challenges to the foreign language teaching system.

1.1 Multicultural linguistic personality

At present, the problem of multicultural personality, for the understanding of which the ways of interaction between personality and culture are crucial

(Banks, 1993; Hammer, 1991; Mathis, 2016; Ponterotto, 2010; Ramirez, 1999), is being actualised. Ponterotto (2010) mentioned that the term was first used by Ramirez (1999), who developed an ethnic/racial minority mental health-centred personality model. Ramirez (1999) and Ponterotto (2010) claimed that people with a high level of multicultural personality expand their knowledge of the world by interacting with culturally diverse people. They stated that these individuals have a strong desire to travel and live in different communities and countries. According to Dmitriev (1999), the main quality of multicultural personality is the ability to deal with culturally different people, to be aware of human diversity, to be tolerant, to be able to assert cultural pluralism in society by their personal actions and words.

The question of the relationship between multicultural personality and linguistic personality is extremely important for the development of a conceptual framework of linguistic personality formation. The concept of "linguistic personality" is based on the notion of the personality as a subject of relations and conscious activity, determined by a given system of social relations, culture and conditioned by biological features. The most complete and systematic justification of the concept "linguistic personality" is presented in the works of Karaulov. Having studied primary and secondary linguistic personality, he noted that primary linguistic personality - national belonging - is the basis for the formation of linguistic personality. Linguistic personality, which is formed in the process of learning a foreign language, is also called secondary linguistic personality (Karaulov, 1987). In Fomin's study, "linguistic personality is interpreted not only as a part of the comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of personality...but also as a certain holistic representation of personality, which contains psychological, social, ethical and other components, but refracted through a language" (Fomin, 2005, p.126).

Learning a foreign language does not simply influence the learner, but by shaping linguistic personality, it constantly modifies it, enriching it with new multicultural units reflecting both linguistic and cultural specificity. If linguistic personality is usually understood as a personality expressed in texts and

through language and reconstructed in its main features on the basis of language means, then multicultural linguistic personality should be considered from the same angle, but as developing in multicultural environment. The concept of multicultural linguistic personality is productive because it links all facets of linguistic personality, including its authenticity in mastering its native language and the traits acquired in the process of mastering a non-native language, into a kind of unity. In essence, multicultural linguistic personality is defined as a set of abilities of a person to foreign-language communication at the intercultural level, which is understood as adequate interaction with representatives of other cultures (Guruleva, 2008). Sysoev (2003) emphasised that multicultural linguistic personality is formed by means of the mother tongue and the studied foreign languages. A core feature of such personality is a conscious determination in the spectrum of cultures of modern multicultural societies.

The theory of linguistic personality indicates that in a multicultural society there is no need for secondary linguistic personality who acquires only the conceptual system of speakers of a second (foreign) language, but for multicultural linguistic personality who develops the ability and readiness to interact with representatives of different countries and cultures. Multicultural linguistic personality is a multilingual, tolerant individual who possesses multicultural communication skills in a culturally pluralistic environment at all levels of intercultural communication: global, interethnic and interpersonal. Successful intercultural interaction is facilitated by developing a dual vision, which allows adequate acceptance and understanding of another culture without losing one's own cultural identity, thus developing IC. Scientists, linguodidacticians, methodologists and foreign language teachers agree that teaching a foreign language without teaching culture, which is used by native speakers to display the reality around them, is incomplete. According to Sapir, who pioneered the interaction between culture, language, communication and the individual, language does not exist outside culture (Fig.1), outside the socially inherited set of practical skills and ideas that characterise our way of life (Sapir, 1949, p.75).

Fluency in all four main types of speech activity and language knowledge do not guarantee successful intercultural communication. It is only if a student has the ability to build their own behaviour logically and understand the behaviour of a representative of another culture, has the skills to correlate models of specific behaviour and the ability to convey it to the interlocutor, that such an act of intercultural communication can be considered successful. Communicating within an intercultural situation often leads to conflict situations that are based on knowledge and ignorance, even within communication in the same language. Accordingly, the aim of teaching intercultural communication is to prevent and resolve possible conflict situations by forming and developing students' skills and abilities aimed at understanding lexical and grammatical constructions that correspond to the standards of communicative activity of a representative of different linguistic, national and ethno-cultural communities.

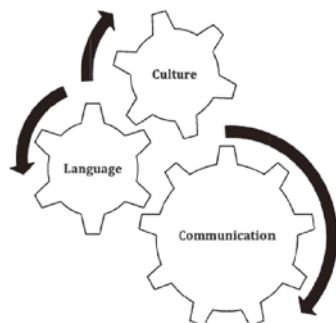


Figure 1. Interaction between culture, language and communication

Since IC is included in a foreign language communication competence, it is logical to assume that the development of one ensures the development of the other. I consider it as an ability of communication participants to achieve mutual positive result in the process of communication. The main task of IC is to form and develop multicultural linguistic personality, who has unique qualities that would allow learners to go beyond the native culture without losing their own cultural identity, and to appear as a cultural mediator.

Within cross-cultural understanding, several stages can be distinguished:

- 1) an initial introduction to the realities of a foreign culture by highlighting features and divergences from the native culture;
- 2) comparative analysis of culture, emotional acceptance and acknowledgement, an attempt to look at the culture of the learner's country through the eyes of its speakers;
- 3) learner's self-identification, which leads to cultural broadening of student's horizons, tolerance, empathy (Kuznetsova, 2019, p. 30).

The concept of multicultural linguistic personality is complex and diverse. It includes many components, criteria, parameters, a whole system of personal qualities. In order to form multicultural linguistic personality, educators should have a high professional and personal level of development, knowledge of universal values of world and national culture, a set of professional and pedagogical competences. The educational system needs to incorporate aspects necessary for the formation of multicultural linguistic personality, capable of cooperating with people from different cultural backgrounds. Among them:

- Cultural aspect, aimed at the development of learner's ethnic self-awareness as an essential part of global consciousness, overcoming negative prejudices and stereotypes, ensuring appreciation of other people's culture as well as their own.
- Cognitive aspect, oriented towards the development of an active cognitive interest in both native and foreign cultures, representing the identity and uniqueness of the native culture in dialectical unity with the world culture.
- Self-regulated learning, oriented towards developing self-discipline and successful independent learning process, as the formation of multicultural linguistic personality is closely connected to the learner's ability to control their educational activities.
- Reflexive aspect, aimed at the perception and awareness of the significance of cultural diversity for personal growth and the development of human civilisation (Kuznetsova, 2019, p.34).

In terms of multicultural linguistic personality formation, the need to revise approaches to foreign language teaching is undeniable. Building of cognitive interest, expansion of cultural knowledge, and self-regulated learning are only possible in a flexible, interactive, collaborative educational setting that is oriented towards the characteristics of the modern student. A digital learning environment contributes to the realisation of the above-mentioned aspects.

1.2 Blended learning and ICTs

BL, traditionally understood as the integration of face-to-face and online learning (Stein & Graham, 2020; Bonk & Graham, 2006), is now widely used in higher education. It stimulates student's motivation by blurring the boundaries of the study location and fosters learner autonomy by providing wide access to media resources. This form of learning supports the process of integrated self-learning, whereby students receive all directions and instructions while assignments are completed and tested outside the classroom. The use of BL and ICTs facilitates the creation of educational trajectories, prioritising and thus building a learning roadmap for each student. Educational platforms, learning management systems (LMSs) allow for the development of online exercises which, although limited in variety, they can still facilitate independent learning by providing students with feedback. They enable activities to systematise language structures. It is an educational advantage, as it releases time for direct teacher-student communication during face-to-face classes. In addition, the possibility to record student's own statement (monological or dialogic), to upload written assignments, audio/video materials, stimulates students' self-regulated learning as well as their collaborative work.

The analysis of various academic works (Allan, 2007; Bonk, 2006, Cartier et al., 2020; Dahlia et al, 2020; Puren, 2018; Smith, 2001) suggests that BL is a way of organising a productive person-centred and culturally relevant educational process. BL has great potential in students' multicultural linguistic personality formation, making the educational process flexible, interactive, independent and student-centred (Fig. 2).

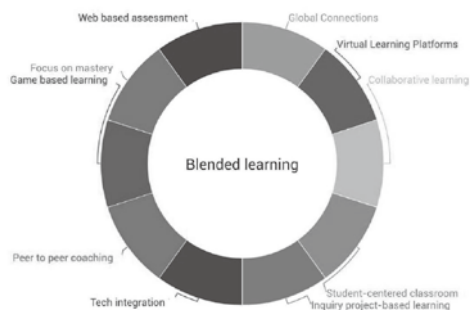


Figure 2. Blended learning components

1.3 Study objectives and research questions

Considering the need to revise approaches to foreign language teaching in terms of multicultural orientation of the educational process, the following research questions were formed:

1. What are the most effective ways of forming and developing university students' IC?
2. How significant is the digital learning environment for students' multicultural linguistic personality formation?
3. How productive are ICTs and BL in developing university students' IC?

The aim of the study was to identify and analyse the possibilities of university students' multicultural linguistic personality formation and IC development. In order to achieve the aim, the following objectives were considered for this study:

- to study theoretical foundations and experience of implementing BL and ICTs in the foreign language classroom;
- to consider the types of ICTs and BL organisation for developing students' IC and choose appropriate forms of activities for students;
- to assess students' IC;
- to implement the developed ILT model in class;
- to analyse the results of the research.

2 Research design

In the study, the effectiveness of the developed ILT model was analysed. The ILT model was developed on the basis of BL in university to enhance the effectiveness of multicultural interactive educational process. The ultimate goal of the developed ILT model was to help students develop multicultural linguistic personality capable of interacting effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures (Fig. 3).

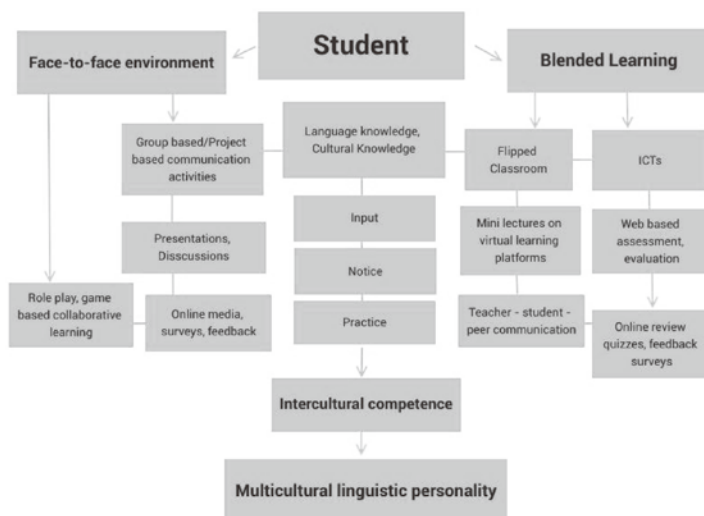


Figure 3. Intercultural language teaching model

The research was conducted at a private university in Tokyo, with 33 first- and second-year students majoring in International Communications. The participants aged between 19 and 20 years old, were studying English as a foreign language and took a compulsory English course at Level 2 out of three possible levels. Level 3 (the highest level) is designed for students with a high level of English proficiency. The level under examination (Level 2) corresponds to level elementary/pre-intermediate or A2/B1 on the CEFR scale. All participants were Japanese. Classes were conducted twice a week, with a duration of 90

minutes, and the 15-week course was designed. The research was conducted in the first semester (April-August) of the academic year 2022/2023 in the course “Communication English”, which integrated all types of productive and receptive activities: listening, reading, speaking, writing and multicultural aspect. The students were using Breakthrough Plus 2 textbook that includes a blend of print and digital up-to-date content components. It is a blended, flexible, content-rich course, which covers high-interest themes in a thorough but accessible way.

2.1 Research method and data collection

The methods of scientific and pedagogical research were widely used: system-structural analysis, synthesis, observation, questionnaires, etc.

Each participant received two copies of an informed consent form, including the research details: the aims of the study, guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation without remuneration, as well as the option to withdraw at any stage of the research. After the researcher confirmed that the participants understood the contents, the form was signed by both parties. At all stages of the research, including data collection and analysis, the data was handled exclusively by the researcher.

The face-to-face weekly lessons took place in a classroom with a projector and WiFi. The students had the choice of using smart devices and/or PCs. Instructional methods included options for facilitated group and/or paired work, working with online media and lectures.

Approbation and implementation of the ILT model consisted of several stages of experimental research.

At the initial stage of the experiment, the analysis of the pedagogical context was carried out, the general level of students' English language proficiency and their intercultural skills were assessed. Selected and designed materials were used to assess intercultural competence. The LMS platform was utilised to distribute the questionnaires among the students. Along with questionnaires and tests, student monitoring techniques were used to identify the state of development of students' linguistic and intercultural competence.

The next stage of the study was related to planning of learning activities and learning content design tasks in the e-learning university environment. The primary objective of this stage was to provide the students with linguistic and intercultural knowledge by introducing them to a range of authentic language resources. The self-study material was then discussed and applied in collaborative communicative activities in face-to-face classes.

In the final stage of the research, the effectiveness of the developed ILT model was evaluated.

3 Findings

3.1 The first stage of experimental learning

Several questionnaires and tests were administered during the initial stage of the experiment. The students' level of language proficiency was assessed by means of linguistic tests (reading, listening, writing). Speaking tests during the course often had the same structure: the students had to discuss and solve problems with each other. For instance, the pedagogical aims of unit 'Getting along' were: 1) to individually convey appropriate language of housework, making requests, asking for permissions and 2) to work in pairs for 2-3 minutes, "practicing the process of communication" (Littlewood, cited in Al-Arishi, 1994, p. 343) so that could simulate a real-life situation. Problem-solving tasks encourage conversations, boost students' creativity, promote their self-confidence and develop fluency.

The participants had different levels of language proficiency: elementary (A1) - 30%, pre-intermediate (A2) - 58%, intermediate (B1) - 12% (Fig.4).

The process of developing intercultural competence in the acquisition of a foreign culture is presented in the works of many scholars (Barrett, 2018; Bennett, 1993, Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993, 2003), who identified its most important elements: intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skill, intercultural awareness.

Intercultural knowledge is an individual's ability to acquire systematized knowledge of intercultural elements of a country, including mentality, beliefs,

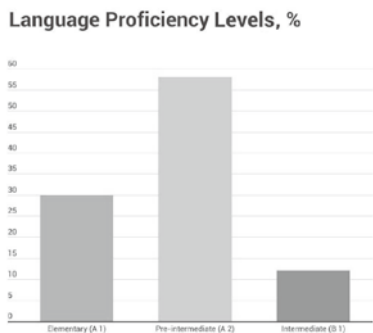


Figure 4. Language Proficiency Levels (1st stage)

customs, traditions of other people, the ability to possess relevant information that would help an individual to interact with representatives of another culture.

Intercultural attitude is open-mindedness and respect for cultural diversity, empathy, interest and curiosity about different cultures.

Intercultural skill is the ability to interpret, analyse cultural phenomena, patterns of speech and non-verbal behaviour, to observe, evaluate and relate to other cultures.

Intercultural awareness is an individual's ability to see the similarities and differences between own and the other culture with a critical perspective. It is an individual's conscious enhancement of their attitudes, knowledge and skills in the process of learning about their own and other cultures.

While assessing students' multicultural competence, the above-mentioned elements were taken into consideration. A questionnaire activity with 35 statements, based on Development of Intercultural Sensitivity model (Bennett, 1993), the Development of Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire (Bennett, 1993) and the Intercultural Sensitivity Index (Fritz et al, 2002), required the participants to circle a number on a seven-point scale next to the statements (ex. "I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures", "I respect the ways people from different cultures behave"), with number 1 being "completely agree" and 7 being "completely disagree". The questionnaire was presented in English and translated into Japanese

for the students as it was believed that would ensure a better understanding of the questions and hence provide a more accurate collection of data.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, 3 groups of students with high, medium and low levels of intercultural competence were identified: low (30%), medium (55%), high (15%) (Fig.5).

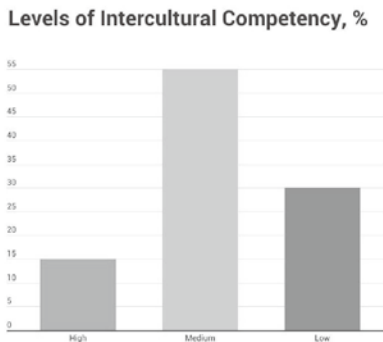


Figure 5. Levels of Intercultural Competency (1st stage)

3.2 The second stage of experimental learning

In the second stage of the experimental work, the ILT model was implemented in the teaching process. For this purpose, a course was designed to develop the students' IC, enabling students' multicultural personality formation.

The course consisted of three elements: 1) learning content; 2) assessment and evaluation; 3) research (online surveys). Learning content included the following: textbook studies; classroom worksheets; a series of mini-lectures (instructor designed), grammar material available on online platforms (ex. Prezi); experience-based classroom activities (in groups/pairs); online media; and homework. A flipped classroom is an instructional strategy that was selected because it integrates the advantages of both offline and online teaching. It not only enables face-to-face communication between educators and students, but also ensures the sharing of online resources and independent learning anytime, anywhere.

The e-learning and face-to-face educational content was developed in the context of the cross-cultural language learning guidelines identified by

Newton et al. (2010). Thus, it:

- integrates linguistic and cultural dimensions;
- promotes a collaborative educational process;
- fosters explicit comparisons and links between cultures;
- is based on a learner-centred approach.

Harmer (1991), Cullen (2000) and Reid (2014) consider authentic materials as one of the sources of intercultural knowledge. Authentic materials are remarkable in that they were not created for the purpose of teaching a language and therefore they reflect the culture of their language (Nunan & Miller, 1995). Cullen (2000) asserts that authentic materials are videos, songs, television or literature, and through a combination of these, students could gain a better understanding of the target culture, moreover, they could learn how to use the language properly and see how the world works outside their own culture.

The participants were offered various authentic resources (films, websites, literature, images, videos, survey reports, etc.). They not only examined the information, but also compared and analysed texts of a similar nature originating from different cultures. Different cultures were considered, varying according to the topic being studied (Japanese and American, Japanese and Korean, Japanese and British, etc.). When discussing Food and Drinks, the students studied two survey reports on the frequency of breakfast consumption in Canada and in the UK and then conducted their own group research, comparing and describing typical breakfast in Japan and another English-speaking country (e.g. the USA, Australia). This assignment allowed the students to master the skills of comparing and contrasting the two target cultures.

It is essential for students to be aware of their preconceived ideas and attitudes before building their IC. The OSEE tool (Deardorff/Deardorff, 2000) was developed to support students in examining their attitudes towards others at the beginning of their intercultural process (Fig. 6)

When discussing Celebrations, the students watched a video (with no subtitles and the sound off) related to some cultural issues. For example, a video depicting the celebration of Shrovetide in Russia was shown. After

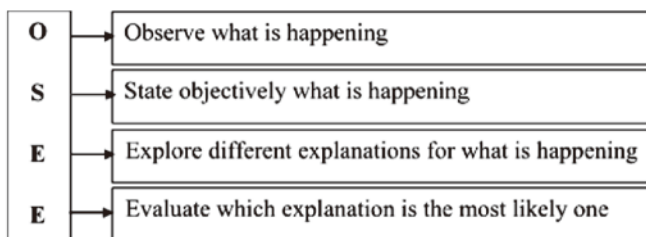


Figure 6. The OSEE tool

watching it, the students had to describe what they had watched. In the next stage the students worked in small groups discussing the video; their task was to suggest possible explanations/reasons for the actions shown in the video. The task required the students to have some background cultural experience to explain what was happening in the video (Deardorff, 2011). After the participants completed their task, their explanations and reasons were presented and evaluated.

In order to avoid misunderstandings in the target culture, to use critical skills to identify the motive of the depicted behaviour, to give an idea of the correct forms of behaviour in problematic cases in the target culture, the students had to complete several problem-solving assignments. For instance, while talking about Rules, the participants read and discussed a text about an exchange student in an American university who was late for class. They compared the behaviour of students and teachers in Japan and in the USA and attempted to find the best solutions to a difficult situation.

The BL environment placed great emphasis on students' independent work and the students were encouraged to use online learning platforms. For example, when using Kahoot to practise grammar and vocabulary, they received instant corrective feedback on their assignment, the students did not have to wait for the next lesson. Some platforms allowed (Kahoot, ISLCollective, etc.) to work both in a group and individually. The electronic version of the textbook and its components (Teacher's Presentation Kit and Resource Centre) were actively used. In addition, the students could also mark the exercises they were

struggling with and the teacher could see which material needed extra work and assign tasks to that student. The participants submitted their homework online. The LMS was actively used, the teacher could duplicate assignments in written form and the students could send their work by attaching it to their personal messages. The teacher could choose the due date of the assignment and always see whether it was completed on time or not, could keep track of who submitted the assignment, and could give feedback. Thus, teaching became more individualised. There was continuous interaction between the students and the teacher, both online and offline. If for some reason the students could not attend the class, it was always possible to join the lesson online. In pairs and groups, the students created dialogues, discussed problems on the topics being studied, questioned each other, etc. In the case of online presence, the students who were in the classroom could also join the online group members and discuss the issues together.

Teaching of writing requires extra attention. In BL, the students had to correspond with each other and with the teacher, which helped the natural development of writing skills. The participants were able to send a message to the teacher at their convenience via the online platform as well as using email. They learned how to write correctly an address, emails, requests using polite forms and formal language, which was a significant contribution to foreign language learning and the development of writing skills. For instance, while doing the project “Dream Vacation”, the students emailed a tourist information centre in a city of their choice (outside Japan) to obtain some information about that place.

In students’ projects, the students recorded dialogues-discussions, then listened to them, found mistakes, re-recorded and posted them on the group chat for everyone to listen to and check. In the activity, they had the opportunity to listen to and analyse both their own speech and that of a teammate. The students enjoyed the activity and were responsible in completing the task, because it was important for them to receive appreciation from their classmates and the teacher.

Thus, a unique environment of intercultural communicative competence was created. Intercultural dialogue took place in the students' collaboration activities in the foreign language classroom.

3.3 The third stage of experimental learning

The initial aim of the study was to identify and analyse the possibilities of students' multicultural linguistic personality formation and IC development in e-learning environment. Thus, the results of the research were based on the following criteria:

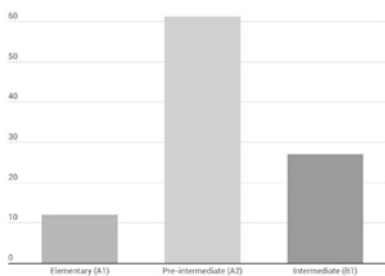
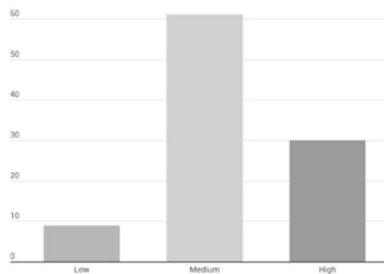
1. English proficiency level;
2. IC level;

The analysis of the questionnaires, language test results at the third stage of the pedagogical experiment led to the conclusion that students' English proficiency level and intercultural competency level significantly improved (Fig.7, 8).

The participants improved their language proficiency: elementary (A1) - 12%, pre-intermediate (A2) - 61%, intermediate (B1) - 27% (Fig.7). Positive developments can be observed in levels of IC: high - 30 %, medium 61 %, low 9% (Fig.8).

The level of students' IC increased when the level of English proficiency increased. Moreover, there was a significant difference between the levels of IC of students with higher English proficiency and the levels of IC of students with lower English proficiency. Thus, one of the aspects influencing a student's level of IC is learner's language proficiency.

The designed ILT model is evidence-based as it has been implemented in a real context and has produced positive results in developing university students' IC.

Language Proficiency Levels, %**Figure 7. Language Proficiency Levels
(3rd stage)****Levels of Intercultural Competency, %****Figure 8. Levels of Intercultural Competency
(3rd stage)**

4 Discussion and conclusion

The students' multicultural linguistic personality formation was feasible due to several pedagogical conditions that have been identified and implemented, which enable the successful development of university students' IC. They include:

1) The selected learning materials; the content of the learning materials should be authentic, relevant, informative and appropriate to the age and interests of the learners. However, I suggest that intercultural content in English textbooks should not only focus on the cultures of English-speaking countries, but other cultures around the world should be equally addressed in new English textbooks.

2) Collaborative activities; by incorporating such activities into the foreign language curriculum, students become aware of how their attitudes, knowledge and language skills can affect their intercultural experience. As a result, students could gain an understanding of how to deal with intercultural situations with an open mind, which leads not only to more successful communication but also to building positive relationships with native speakers.

3) The deployment of ICTs and BL strategies; the use of BL and ICTs increases students' interest in the language and in the subject, reduces the number of

missed lessons to a minimum, provides students with the opportunity for constant communication with their teacher, promotes learners' greater independence, allows for better adaptation to the learning styles and needs of each student.

4) Student's individual characteristics; they have always been at the focal point of second language acquisition.

As a result, the application of different pedagogical methods and tools in e-learning and face-to-face educational environments promoted the students' personal development:

- enhancement to students' motivation to learn not only the language, but also the intercultural aspects of the target language;
- considerable improvement in students' English proficiency level;
- improvement of communication skills required for successful intercultural communication;
- development of multicultural thinking and humanistic values, tolerance.

The developed ILT model appears to have been effective. Although the current performance is positive, further work continues to explore how the design and methodology of learning can support the development of IC, and in particular how these links can be sustainably established in the teaching of the course. Given the theoretical links between the concept of 'intercultural competence' and 'global world', the use of ICTs and BL offers the prospect of further research in this area. Global challenges demand global thinking and international cooperation, and foreign language education is in the best position to elaborate and implement pragmatic objectives, courses and curricula that reach the goals of multicultural societies. It is vital that foreign language teachers educate their students about the relationship between language, culture and communication and promote the development of linguistic, communicative and intercultural competence. Students could also explore their own beliefs and experiences from a different perspective, discuss viewpoints different from their own, and gain insights into another culture from the inside.

A potential limitation of this study is that the students could be

interviewed and these qualitative results, triangulated with the quantitative results of the questionnaire, would add another angle to the study.

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