

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EUROPEAN
CONTEXT ACADEMIC COURSE AS ONE STEP FORWARD
TOWARDS EUROPEANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
IN BELARUS**

Contemporary multicultural societies demonstrate solidarity in viewing social communication as the key to societal cohesiveness and inclusiveness. Growing ethnic diversity of European population (Belarus falls in the line) creates the urgent need for competent intercultural specialists / citizens for ensuring equity, prosperity and social inclusion in multicultural world. Thus knowledge of intercultural communication (IC) ethics and principles and acquisition of IC competences in a wide range of the spheres of application significantly contribute to gaining by young people intercultural understanding and the culture of tolerance for effective resistance to critical social events or their prevention. A specially designed teaching course helps face the challenge.

The teaching course *Intercultural Communication in the European Context (ICEC)* can be a powerful contribution to enhancing intercultural understanding, acquiring by students intercultural communication knowledge, competences and skills thus fostering social integration on the European continent through well-performed education. This claim is grounded and explicated in the objectives of the course which afford to envisage the following impact: it will evoke in Belarusian young people a constructive interest to up-to-date Europe and understanding of the advantages of a consolidated European Union, expand their ideas about the principles of EU functioning; it will build bridges between nations, cultures and languages. Alongside the above mentioned social benefits, the ICEC course introduction ensures young people's social activity and mobility for professional and personal fulfillment in the line with the requirements of today's labor market.

To take full advantage of possibilities for personal and professional development available in the EU and worldwide young people today in non EU countries need to be equipped for overcoming a number of objective and subjective barriers. Some of such limits that one inevitably bumps up against in his aspiration for personal fulfillment are lack of essential knowledge on EU social context, appropriate communicative competences and skills as well as deficit of language experience.

EU-related issues have so far been included into the curricula to a limited extent. Delivered at some BSU's humanitarian faculties short curricula

courses in the field of IC whatever entitled they may be involve studying general theoretical aspect of IC mostly within the framework of well-known Russian and partly US studies. Current programs are lacking practical value, engagement of valuable European IC studies and experience, reference to relevant European multicultural contexts.

So, most of Belarusian students do not automatically come in contact with EU subjects, their ideas of the EU functioning and values are pretty vague and restricted by stereotypes; very few have good command of European languages and fail to participate in the EU mobility programmes. Together with economical and geographical obstacles all this creates unfavorable conditions for young Belarusians compared to their peers to become competitive on the labor market, deliver personal growth, dream big and aim high.

So, the *ICEC* teaching course introduction to the curricula can be a reasonable shift in higher education towards investing in in-demand knowledge and skills even if done at the expense of some fundamental theoretical courses.

Most promising is considered the *ICEC*'s content of interdisciplinary character so that the course could cater for students of various humanitarian specialties. This interdisciplinary character can be provided by integration of the following components of IC.

Anthropological, social and cultural aspect of communication can be embodied in the course in the scope of knowledge on communication theory, multilingualism theory, subject-related aspects of social psychology and culture-marked verbal behavior presented in EU theory and practice both in historically successful intercultural patterns and in the contemporary European practices (based on works of C.E. Shannon, W. Weaver, R. Ellis, J. Deveau, D. Mayers, J.N. Martin, T.K. Nakayama etc). The *legal aspect* of IC implies awareness of some EU policies and regulations in action (Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), European Cultural Convention (1954), European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008), The Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism (2009), White Paper on a European Communication policy (2006), European Year of Lifelong Learning and the European Commission's Green Paper (1996); the European Year of Languages (2001) and others). *Language aspect* is seen as language competences for intercultural interaction in a wide range of social spheres. The students will also learn the European standards for grading an individual's language proficiency and basic language tests (TOEIC, IELTS, CAE, DELF, DALF, TestDaF, TDN 3-5, DELE and others).

Such concepts as social order in post-war Europe, today's EU cultural diversity, intercultural understanding for cohesive and inclusive societies; principles of Europe's intercultural dialogue as based on human rights (civil, political, socio-economic), democracy and respect for law; intercultural competences in democratic citizenship, human rights education, language learning; bilingualism and multilingualism as a tool of IC and integration; anthropological aspects of a multilingual personality; EU Communication policy and Language education policy, EU language competence standards for successful IC, for studying, work and personal fulfillment, intercultural encounters – are to be viewed within the course.

So, the *ICEC* program reshapes the vision of IC towards the European angle with the focus on the democratic governance of cultural and language diversity through IC competences and successful IC practices as well as through social policies, language policy and provisions of the law.

Relevant teaching methodology that involves the use of interactive and creative teaching techniques such as case-studies, reflective discussions, guided group activities, debate games, simulations technology, cross-cultural comparative study projects with public presentations of the results can ensure high-level performance of the teaching course and its practical outcome.

Suggested content of the *ICEC* course pursues the objective to equip Belarusian students and young professionals with knowledge of European Union subjects relevant for their academic and professional lives and enhance their civic skills. European Union is a model of efficient intercultural communication in interdependence management. The course equips the students of social communication specialties with relevant knowledge of EU experience of transforming differences and cultural diversity into positive factors for global development of societies. Intercultural communication knowledge and skills develop in young people multiple cultural perspectives and approaches to conducting business, an ability to successfully adapt to living in different cultures and working with international partners, integrate into international education system, which in the long run will help them become more competitive and professionally successful.

In addition, the *ICEC* course mainstreams and diversifies the EU related subjects throughout the curricula proposed by higher institutions to the students, thus contributing to the Europeanization of the curricula, at BSU in particular.

The success of this project outputs and results, high level of teaching performance, the authority and influence of the BSU as the leader in excellence and innovation in Belarus will inspire the implementation of the EU related subject into the curricular in other Belarusian higher educational establishments (HEIs), create research interest to EU subjects.

The following sectors will benefit from the supposed outcomes: higher education, social sector, labor market. Having recently joined the Bologna Process, Belarusian higher education is still distant from EU educational standards. Belarusian HEIs are in need of timely support to modernize reform processes in higher education which can be successful through active dialogue with the EU in the field. Implementation of the *ICEC* course will mainstream European issues in existing courses, EU content into curricula, demonstrate to policy-makers a direction of reform processes in higher education, motivate to innovation and excellence in education. This investment in knowledge and skills will benefit the labor market as it will become more competitive through talent, innovation, proficiency and competence. Civil sector is likely to become better equipped with skill-oriented specialists competent in communication practices for forging strong links, fostering intercultural dialogue and active citizenship.

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КОММУНИКАТИВНО-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ КАК СПОСОБ ЭФФЕКТИВНОГО ОСВОЕНИЯ ДЕЛОВОГО ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА В ВУЗЕ

Основной целью обучения деловому иностранному языку в вузе является оптимизация уровня его практического владения в различных актуальных ситуациях межличностного и делового общения. Вовлечение студентов в активный процесс овладения деловым иностранным языком, обеспечивающий расширение их возможностей в аудировании, говорении, чтении и письме, в настоящее время является серьезной проблемой. В решении данной проблемы исключительно велика роль коммуникативно-ориентированного обучения, в рамках которого иностранный язык делового общения «предстает как объемное взаимообусловленное единство разных регистров» [3, с. 5].

Объединяющим принципом регистров иностранного языка делового общения является нераздельность понятийной и языковой картин мира: изучение основных составляющих иностранного языка делового общения проводится посредством освоения наиболее существенных функционально-обусловленных способов выражения мысли в устной и письменной речи. Планомерное выявление всего многообразия свойств и составляющих динамично развивающегося иностранного языка делового общения позволяет студентам овладеть спецификой и характерными особенностями того или иного регистра. На этой основе используется методика пошагового ситуационного обучения