
© N. G. MURAVJEVA

Senior lecturer, Department of Foreign languages and Cross-cultural communication
for Humanities, Tyumen State University

muravjovan@rambler.ru

UDC 37.01:316.7

THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL CULTURAL COMPETENCE FORMATION IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES (on the example of a foreign language)*

SUMMARY. The article describes the experience of forming social competence, ensuring the formation of a learner as a meaningful subject of socio-cultural educational environment in accordance with new requirements for specialists training. The content component structure of the socio-cultural competence is developed, revealing the intensity of the studied phenomenon at low, medium and high levels of its formation. The procedure of the gradual sociocultural competence formation of university students is described in project activities on the basis of the mechanisms of meaning-making. Stages of social competence formation are correlated with the stages of meaning-making. The paper presents a specially designed set of socio-cultural problem-tasks and projects developed on the basis of hermeneutics, problem and role methods. An authoring system criterion-standard evaluation of social competence formation is revealed. The main result of socio-cultural competence formation is the high level of interest to other cultures, the ability and willingness for the intercultural dialogue in online interaction, and the formation of the value and meaning of personality orientations.

KEY WORDS. Sociocultural competence, meaning making, sociocultural information space, project activity, web-project, web-quest.

Dependence of modern university graduates on the social-cultural information environment, where their personalities develop, makes the problem of **social competence** formation important. Social cultural competence presents one of the general forms of the personal culture. The development and formation of personality occurs while doing some activities, which give the experience of actions, feelings, knowledge and reflection that allow you to “transform information into knowledge in the process of appropriation through meaning-making” [1, 18]. According to the value-semantic approach meaning-making means “the generation of new meanings” and it is realized in the form of **meaningful learning experience** of learners in which “personality-valuable knowledge is acquired, experienced in their social-cultural environment and is formed as a personal realized valuable position. Relying on it,

* The research was carried out with the assistance of the Ministry of education and science of Russian Federation within the State order for 2012-2013 (6.1048.2011).

students define their social personally meaningful goals” [2, 45]. Due to the fact that personal meaningful experience formation occurs in actual communicative-activity forms one of the best means of social competence formation is **project activity**, which requires an active search for information, active interaction between interlocutors and promotes understanding, experiencing and reflection in the process of self-realization in the social-cultural information environment.

This article presents the experience of social cultural competence formation in the project activities based on the mechanisms of meaning-making which provide the development of social cultural experience at the level of meaningful personality-valuable knowledge.

Having analyzed educational theory and practice, we determined the essential characteristic of social cultural competence (SCC) as *an integrative characteristic of a person which presumes the presence of knowledge of different social and cultural fields, including the ability and willingness to interact with others in different ranges of life, relying on their meaningful experience, providing the ability to use information resources for meaningful creative activities in the information environment*. We also singled out its structural components. They are cognitive-informational (knowledge of the social cultural context and cultural concepts underlying different worldviews), meaningful-axiological (reasons for getting education, the ability to interpret information in the social context) and communicative activity-related component (ability to perform productive communication and interaction in the social context, communicative tolerance and ability to contribute to the social-cultural information environment) [3].

Based on this definition, we developed *a model of social cultural competence formation in the project activities*, which is realized on four interrelated stages: a) *subjective* - actualization of subjective experience, b) *projective* - actualization of personal meanings while interpreting social-cultural texts, c) *productive* - self-realization in creative activity and d) *reflexive* – crystallization of meanings in reflection. We also determined the conditions of SCC formation in the joint project activities based on the mechanism of meaning-making. These include: a) projects method integration with hermeneutical, problem-solving and role-playing methods, and b) the use of the developing potential of Internet technologies Web 2.0 (blogging, micro-blogging, wikis, social bookmarking service, social networking). *Social cultural projects* are meant to develop interest in another culture, ability and willingness to intercultural dialogue. However, for personal-meaningful involvement of a learner in the process of learning, formation of their communicative and interpretative skills during Internet interaction, we developed *social cultural problem tasks (jobs)* that are gradually put in a mini project, a web-quest and a web project [4].

For the initiative, formative and summative assessment of social cultural competence formation we chose the criteria and indicators of the investigated phenomenon formation, correlated with its structural and substantive components:

1) *Cognitive criterion*: the acquisition of knowledge about the social cultural context (traditions, customs, information about the national character, about the peculiarities of everyday life, about norms of behavior and others) and cultural concepts underlying different worldviews (linguistic features of social strata - speech stereotypes precedential phenomena, communicative clichés, formula of speech and netiquette, models of communicative behavior in social contexts);

2) *Motivational-value criterion*: the intensity of learning motivation through self-awareness of a subject of cognitive activity, readiness for self-education, self-development and self-reflection, interest in educational cognitive activity, good study progress, activity in the classroom, creative approach to performing educational tasks, initiative; the ability to interpret information in the social-cultural context through the ability to learn, analyze and interpret the meanings of social and cultural texts, reasonably express one's value-semantic position;

3) *Communicative criterion*: the ability to perform productive communication and interaction in the social cultural context through the use of techniques and methods of communication, formedness of communicative tolerance through the ability to understand and accept people belonging to different cultures and societies, the desire for dialogue, cooperation, ability to perceive value-semantic position of another person, understanding of different points of view and the ability to contribute to the social-cultural information environment through the ability to use the services of web 2.0, find information, retrieve, store and use it in a new social context.

According to the intensity of social competence components we identified its three levels: (see Table 1):

1) *low level - easy identification of socio-cultural facts* (a student has little understanding of the social cultural context and cultural concepts, perception of cultural facts occurs without awareness of their personal importance, selection of information is made without critical thinking, a student knows the main means of communication in the online interaction, but is not ready to use them);

2) *intermediate level - emotional-value identification of socio-cultural information* (recognizes oneself as a subject of cognitive activity and is motivated for the acquisition of knowledge about cultural concepts; demonstrates the ability to use the communication techniques while coming in contact; ability to select, analyze and critically perceive the information; forms one's own world view, but has difficulty in expressing one's own opinions, to present and describe one's own world view and compare it to another);

3) *high level - self-identification in the social context* (recognizes oneself as a subject of cognitive activity, has skills of self-analysis and reflection; ability to exchange knowledge about the social-cultural context and cultural concepts; shows readiness to use techniques and methods of communication coming in contact; ability to select, analyze, critically perceive information and create on its basis own products; ability to use information resources for the meaningful creative activity in the information environment).

Content-Component Structure of Social Cultural Competence

	Cognitive-informational component	Meaningful-axiological component	Communicative activity-related component
High level of social cultural competence	ability to expand, differentiate and intensify knowledge of the socio-cultural context and cultural concepts, knowledge of the traditions, customs, national character, the peculiarities of everyday life, norms of behavior and ability to use them successfully in a new socio-cultural context.	awareness of themselves as subjects of cognitive activity and responsibility for their self-education and self-development, successful skills of reflection, a pronounced interest in the content of cognitive activity, good study progress, activity and initiative in the classroom, successful interpretation the meanings of social cultural texts and owning the basics of comparative analysis, ability to assess the received information and compare it with personal experience.	ability to use the necessary models of communicative behavior in social contexts depending on the purpose and situation of communication, tolerance, positive attitude to other manifestations of culture, ability to use Internet services Web 2.0 independently for searching and processing information to create a new product, using a creative approach to the learning activities.
Intermediate level of social cultural competence	knowledge of the well-known facts about the traditions and customs, national character, peculiarities of everyday life, norms of behavior, but there is the problem in distinguishing the universal and specific in represented cultures, knowledge of the communicative behavior models, but there is a problem with true interpretation of them.	awareness of themselves as subjects of cognitive activity, but the need for self-education, self-development depends on the situation, skills of reflection are not fully developed, interest and desire to the content of cognitive activity is not of a permanent nature, good study progress, activity and initiative in the classroom depend on the situation.	ability to come up with new ideas, but it requires support in the process of their implementation; underdeveloped level of tolerance to the processes of cultural interaction. active behavior in familiar situations, the new contexts cause difficulties, unevenly use of creative approach to the educational process.
Low level of social cultural competence	little knowledge of socio-cultural facts, speech etiquette, lexical items, poor knowledge of the traditions and customs of the represented cultures, misinterpretation of communicative behavior models.	lack of awareness of themselves as subjects of cognitive activity, desire for self-education and self-development is missing or imposed from outside: by the parents or learning situation, lack of successful reflection skills, lack of interest to the content of cognitive activity, poor study progress, inactivity and low initiative in the classroom.	lack of readiness to work independently, requirement of teachers or fellow students' support, intolerance, negative relationship to other cultures, ability to make a decision or come up with something new causes difficulty, lack of use of creative approach to the learning activities.

The experimental work was aimed at the targeted implementation of the social competence formation model of high school students in the project activities. The experiment was carried out on the basis of the Bachelor's program of Tyumen State University and Tyumen Oil and Gas University, in 2010 - 2013. As a result of a representative sample we formed a control group CG (42 students) and an experimental group EG (40 students), which contained students of the humanities departments: «Psychological and pedagogical education» «Pedagogical education», «Special defectology education», «Advertising and public relations», «Sociology» and «Design». The students of CG were taught on the same program as the students of EG, but without the use of technologies and techniques presented in the model.

To identify the original social cultural competence components formation we used the following methods: the primary method of students' products study, content analysis of written works of students (analysis of the world view, evaluative judgments, interpretative skills) method of expert evaluations, testing, questioning and method of introspection (soul-searching and reflection). To determine the level of cognitive-informational component formation of social competence we conducted a social cultural written test based on a modified questionnaire by I.A. Sternin "Communicative Behavior of the Americans and Russians". The test was meant to identify the initial level of social cultural knowledge of the students [5]. To identify meaningful-axiological component of social-cultural competence we used semantic differential technique, which helped to see students' worldview while doing social cultural projects in a foreign language. Students' ability to interpret the information in the social cultural context, to present their value- semantic position was measured on the basis of the study of their project works and content analysis of the social-cultural texts created by the students.

Communicative activity-related component of the students' social cultural competence, that contains the ability to perform productive communication and interaction in the social context and the ability to contribute to the socio-cultural information environment, was measured using the technique of diagnosing the level of communicative tolerance by V.V. Boyko, as well as the method of expert estimates.

The results of the study of the criteria of social cultural competence formation in the diagnostic phase revealed no significant differences in the degree of their development in both groups of students: ability to identify social cultural facts and to interpret them without assistance caused difficulties. According to the test, most of the students of EG (72%) and CG (70%) had little understanding of the social cultural context and cultural concepts (speech etiquette, lexical items, traditions and customs of represented cultures, models of communicative behavior). According to the results of observation and analysis of expert evaluations we concluded that striving for self-education and self-development of EG students (63%) and CG (68%) is either missing or imposed from the outside: by the parents or the educational situation, that indicated low motivation, lack of interest, low progress and passivity in education. According to the analysis of semantic differential technique it becomes clear that the

students do not connect their future success, professionalism and freedom with international communication and work in another country, as far as, being unable to use English properly, they feel undereducated and bewildered although they studied a foreign language at school and at the university. The analysis of the solutions of the problematic social cultural situations offered by the students showed their inability to use the necessary communicative behavior models in social cultural contexts depending on the purpose and situation of communication, as well as the prevalence of non-productive ways of interacting. Having summarized the diagnostic results, we concluded that most students in EG (65%) and CG (67%) had a low level of social cultural competence formation.

On the forming stage of experimental work during 2010-2013 we implemented the model of the social cultural competence formation in the project activities while integrating lessons of foreign language (“English”, English in the professional domain”) and humanities courses. The model was implemented through immersing the students in the creative meaningful project activities and the use of internet technology Web 2.0 (blogs, microblogs, wikis, social bookmarking and social networking) through modeling of virtual learning environment and preparedness for intercultural dialogue in terms of Internet interaction.

To implement this model we developed a dynamic program and placed it on a special website in the Internet <http://www.teacherpage.com/muravyeva/home.htm>, which provided gradual introduction into learning the complex of **sociocultural problem tasks (jobs) and socio-cultural projects** of increasing complexity, developed on the basis of hermeneutic, problem-solving and role methods. In order to create meaningful personal-important product we used social cultural projects of 3 types: mini-project, web quest, and web project.

The model was implemented through four interrelated stages. At the first subjective stage we used *social cultural problematic tasks* within the **social-cultural mini-project** aimed at the modernization of personal experience, motivation enhancement and development of students’ readiness to carry out project activities. To model social cultural situations of real and role communication we used communication tasks to recreate the situation, role play problem orientation, simulation (imaginary situation) and discussion. For example, a mini-project “Personality and Culture” resulted both in the external product «The portrait of a real Russian, Englishman, American, German», and the internal one “new value-reflexive experience” received during students’ interaction aimed at the joint problem-solving. Having completed this stage, the students realized the necessity of the personal contribution to the solving of such problems and were ready to participate in social cultural projects of a more complex type.

At the second projective stage of model realization students were offered tasks in the framework of a social cultural **web-quest** on the basis of the selection of special problematic tasks focused on the interpretation of cultural texts found in the Internet, their analysis and interpretation. According to Tom March “a web-quest is a scaffolded learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web” [6].

He considers that the best web-quests help students “transform newly acquired information into a more sophisticated understanding, inspire students to see richer thematic relationships, facilitate a contribution to the real world of learning and reflect on their own metacognitive processes” [6]. For example, during the web-quest «British universities» (<http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=137250>) students found social cultural similarities between the representatives of different cultural and social groups in Russia and the UK, based on their own experience and comparing their world view with the one a representative of another culture, another society.

Interpreting social cultural texts we used *meaning-updating tasks* such as “conversion of information, use of the “information gap”, a sociological survey, a joint text composition”, which formed the ability to extract, interpret important cultural information and present it in the form of “live” knowledge. This web quest resulted in an external product - an analytical article, as well as an internal one- enrichment of meanings through dialogue, comparing one’s own texts and other cultural texts.

These tasks “allowed making a solid meaningful system of the problem and ways of its solution, created by others” [7; 24]. Awareness of social and personal value of knowledge for solving the problematic social cultural tasks increased students’ motivation and formed a purposeful attitude to the problem.

At the third productive stage of SCC forming, the students implemented their developed cultural experience in the social cultural Internet-project (web- project), which is a long-term problematic task aimed at a web publication. Unlike a web-quest at this stage, students chose their learning path themselves and decided themselves in what form to present the results of their projects. In web projects students use the technologies «to create meaningful projects that can be shared with the audience all over the world» (Debski Gruba, 1999) [8]. The practical goal of these projects was to create websites devoted to the culture and history of Russia, England, the USA; to design a virtual tour around the university or the city of one’s dream; to publish the research work on professional topics in the Internet; to place workshops or create a personal portfolio on the platform of a blog or wiki site. The teacher coordinated the students via e-mail, commented on their activity during their intermediate steps and gave both personal and on-line consultations. For example, in the web project “University celebrity” students created virtual portraits of themselves and their group mates, posted articles, comments, photos, videos online http://unicelebrity.wikia.com/wiki/UNICELEBRITY_Wiki. The purpose and result of the web project were not just to post materials on this site, but also to change the students themselves as far as “meanings and strategies developed in the framework of social experience lead to high motivation and serious attitude to the project» (Warschauer M., 2000) [9].

At the final reflexive stage we used *hermeneutic methods* such as the essay method and the method of unfinished sentences, as well as the survey method and «*portfolio*» for meaningful semantic generalization and planning of the further work according to the outcomes of learning.

At the final stage of our experimental work, EG and CG underwent the same diagnostic testing with the help of the tools applied earlier. Based on an introspective

analysis of the data of self-assessment and reflection, expert assessment of the students' actions in the projects and analysis of their works, it was concluded that there is an increase in the number of students who are aware of being subjects of cognitive activity, have skills of self-analysis and reflection, have ability to select, analyze the information critically, create on its basis their own products and use Internet resources for their creativity in the information environment.

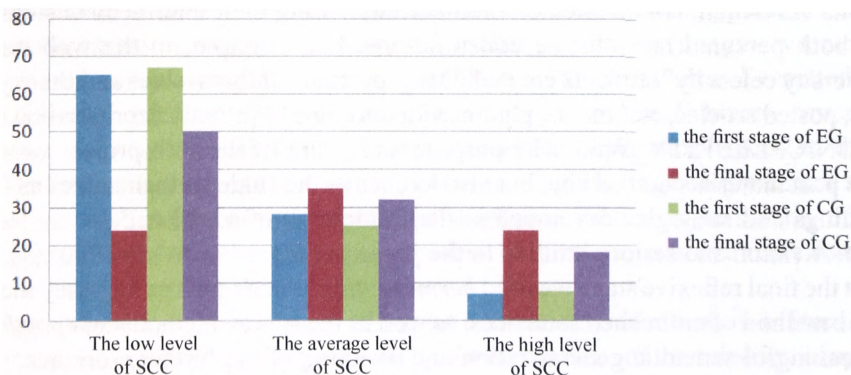
Table 2 and the following histogram show the comparison of the levels of social cultural competence formation of high school students at the initial and final stages. According to the results of experimental work we found positive dynamics of social cultural competence formation in both groups, but the EG students demonstrated more significant changes. Decrease of the number of students with a low level and increase of the number of students with an intermediate and high level of social cultural competence allow us to state that positive changes are caused by practical implementation of the developed model in the project activities in the educational process.

Table 2

Dynamics of Social Cultural Competence Formation on the Initial and Final Stages of Experimental Work (%)

Levels of social cultural competence	low				intermediate				high			
	At the beginning		At the end		At the beginning		At the end		At the beginning		At the end	
	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG
Cognitive	72	70	22	49	27	27	49	34	6	6	25	20
Motivational-value	63	68	27	53	24	20	54	27	5	7	26	16
Communicative	59	62	24	47	34	28	52	35	9	10	23	17
Total	65	67	24	50	28	25	52	32	7	8	24	18

Comparative analyzes of levels of SCC formation



In conclusion, it should be noted that the proposed model of social cultural competence formation in the project activity refers to the soft models of learning (the

term by V.A. Testov), where the main goal is not “to transfer the knowledge as a baton from one person to another, but to create conditions under which it is possible to see the acquisition of knowledge by the students as a result of their active and creative work» [10]. The integration of social cultural projects based on Internet-technologies Web 2.0 with role-playing, hermeneutical and problem-solving methods provides all students with the most favorable conditions for the development of the social cultural competence qualities, through the development of motivation, reflection and provision of active mental meaningful activity. The high level of interest in other cultures, the ability and willingness to intercultural dialogue in Internet interaction, formation of personal value-semantic orientations is the result of social competence formation in the social cultural information environment.

REFERENCES

1. Zagvyazinsky, V.I. The social functions of education and its strategic guidelines for the period of modernization. *Obrazovanie i nauka — Education and Science*. 2011. № 7 (86). Pp. 14-22. (in Russian).
2. Beljakova, E.G. Model of sense-oriented education. *Znanie. Ponimanie. Umenie — Knowledge. Understanding. Ability*. 2010. № 3. Pp. 44-48. (in Russian).
3. Murav'eva, N.G. The concept of social competence in modern science and educational practice. *Vestnik Tjumenskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta — Tyumen State University Herald*. 2011 № 9. Series «Pedagogy. Psychology». Pp. 136-143. (in Russian).
4. Murav'eva, N.G. Model of the socio-cultural competence formation of university students in the project activity (on the example of foreign language). *Obrazovanie i nauka — Education and Science*. 2013. № 3. Pp. 121-131. (in Russian).
5. Amerikanskoe kommunikativnoe povedenie [American Communicative Behavior]. / Ed. by I.A. Sternin and M.A. Sternina. Voronezh, 2001. 224 p. (in Russian).
6. March, T. The Learning Power of Web Quests Educational Leadership December 2003/ January 2004. Vol. 61. № 4. New Needs, New Curriculum Pages. Pp. 42-47. URL: <http://tommarch.com/writings/ascdwebquests/> (accessed 09.07.2013).
7. Zakirova, A.F. Hermeneutic approach to the conceptual justification of educational information abilities of schoolchildren at the present stage of education. *Vestnik Tjumenskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta — Tyumen State University Herald*. 2011. № 9. Pp. 21-26. (in Russian).
8. Debski, R. and Gruba, P. A qualitative survey of tertiary instructor attitudes towards project-based CALL. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. 1999. 12, 3. Pp. 219–239.
9. Warschauer, M. and Kern, R. (Eds.). *Network-Based Language Teaching: Concepts & Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
10. Testov, V.A. Hard and soft models of learning. Simulation of social and educational systems [Zhestkie i mjagkie modeli obuchenija. Modelirovanie social'no-pedagogicheskikh sistem]. *M-ly region. nauch.-praktich. konf. (16-17 sent. 2004 g.)* (Materials of the regional scientific-practical conference (16-17 September 2004)). / Ch. Ed. A.K. Kolesnikov, Ed. Ed. I.P. Lebedeva. Perm State Pedagogical University. Perm, 2004. Pp. 35-39. (in Russian).