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The Equality of Intercultural Communication Partners and Methods of its Maintenance

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Abstract

The article deals with less explored problems of intercultural communication related to partners' equality when the language of communication is native to one partner and foreign to another. Objective and subjective reasons of unequal status in intercultural communication are revealed. Methods of partners' equality establishment and maintenance are identified, including bipolar tolerance, human factor manifestation and adherence of partners in intercultural communication to their native culture.

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1. Introduction

Currently, intercultural communication is going through a period of real renaissance, its problems are examined in various areas of knowledge, including philosophy, psychology, linguistics, sociology, etc.

We are studying a less examined specific aspect of intercultural communication, in particular intercultural communication partners' equality and its maintenance as a professional skill of specialists in intercultural communication.

As we know, professional training of intercultural communication specialists is aimed at creating foreign language communicative competence with a number of its components, including such a component as intercultural

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communication.

Intercultural communication in Russian and foreign (Byram, 1997) literature is construed as the ability to communicate successfully with representatives of other cultures. It is also known that the communicative effect between intercultural communication partners depends on the language which should be common to both of them.

However, the process and results of intercultural dialogue performed by partners in a language, which is native to one of them and foreign to another, are not fully studied yet.

This fact determines the status inequality of intercultural conversation, which in turn results in imbalance and failures of partners' equality.

2. Methods of partners' equality establishment

2.1. Intercultural communication particularities presentation

There is no need to prove the fact that even professional knowledge of a foreign language (C2 on the CEFR foreign language proficiency scale), i.e. proficiency in it, is not comparable to the level of native language mastery. There are many signs identifying a foreigner speaking in another language.

Different levels of partners' proficiency in language of intercultural communication make the status of such communication objectively non-equal, and the partners objectively find themselves in non-equal positions.

Although we support the equal status of intercultural communication (Baryshnikov, 2013), we realize that in fact intercultural conversation status may not become truly equal without an interpreter's involvement.

Yet we are certain that there are other non-used reserves allowing transforming status of non-equal intercultural communication to equal, and maintaining partners' equality. True equality of partners in intercultural communication is ensured through open, symmetrical mirror communication (Merhrmann, 2007), actualized through strategies based on humanistic values such as good relations and beauty. Intending to contribute to the development of open intercultural communication, we developed Intercultural Communication Code of Honor which is, definitely, not perfect, but could become a uniting principle for supporters of open equal status intercultural communication.

We shall illustrate it with a few clauses of the Code:

- do not use your professional mastery of foreign languages to impede mutual understanding, to incite ethnic discord and bigotry toward representatives of other languages and foreign cultures;
- strengthen authority of your country which you represent in the process of intercultural interaction;
- remember, that in every international contact you stand as an official and plenipotentiary representative of your country which interests your advocate for;
- in the process of intercultural communication be governed by the ideas of friendship, mutual help, trust, tolerance, and desire for mutual understanding;
- in pursuit of noble goals under no circumstances adhere to communicative manipulations, tricks, deceptions, dirty technologies, and rules of black rhetoric: remember, noble goals of intercultural communication cannot be achieved by immoral and unprincipled means (Baryshnikov, 2010:247-248.).

However, strong pressure of manipulative strategies restrains practical implementation of open intercultural communication strategies.

It would be extremely naïve not to notice that originally declared humanistic values of intercultural communication are notably transformed into methods for suppression of one partner by another one, into means of ultimatums and sanctions.

Manipulative strategies are widely seen to prevail in negotiations, consulting, etc.

Intercultural communication is broadly invaded by communicative methods of K. Bredemeier's black rhetoric, which is defined by the author as "manipulation through all required rhetoric, dialectic, eristic and rabulistic means in order to drive the conversation into desired directions and bring an opponent or audience to the necessary result" (Bredemeier, 2007:12). The author is frankly saying that the one who uses black rhetoric, breaching the rules of conversation, wins.

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