



## **The specifics of creating foreign language environment as a successful journey in educational process**

**Mykhailo Poplavskiy<sup>1</sup>**

**Yuliia Rybinska<sup>2</sup>**

**Tetiana Rozumna<sup>3</sup>**

**Svitlana Pechenizka<sup>4</sup>**

**Tetiana Nikolaieva<sup>5</sup>**

**Olga Ivasiv<sup>6</sup>**

**Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 12 (4)**

<https://jett.labosfor.com/>

Date of reception: 26 Apr 2021

Date of revision: 25 Aug 2021

Date of acceptance: 23 Oct 2021

**Mykhailo Poplavskiy, Yuliia Rybinska, Tetiana Rozumna, Svitlana Pechenizka, Tetiana Nikolaieva, Olga Ivasiv (2021). The specifics of creating foreign language environment as a successful journey in educational process. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 12(4). 138 – 145.**

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<sup>1</sup>Doctor of Science (Dr. Hab) in Education, Professor, The President and the Rector of Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)

<sup>2</sup>Doctor of Science (Dr. Hab) in Education, Professor, Head of Foreign Philology Department, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)

<sup>3</sup>Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (PhD in Pedagogy), Associate Professor, English Philology Department, Mariupol State University (Mariupol, Ukraine)

<sup>4,5</sup>Candidate of Philological Sciences (PhD in Philology), Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Philology, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)

<sup>6</sup>Lecturer, Department of Foreign Philology, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)



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**Mykhailo Poplavskyy<sup>1</sup>, Yuliia Rybinska<sup>2</sup>, Tetiana Rozumna<sup>3</sup>, Svitlana Pechenizka<sup>4</sup>, Tetiana Nikolaieva<sup>5</sup>, Olga Ivasiv<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Doctor of Science (Dr. Hab) in Education, Professor, The President and the Rector of Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)

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<sup>6</sup>Lecturer, Department of Foreign Philology, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Email ID: julialeo1619@gmail.com, tetiana.rozumna2017@gmail.com, lana7sun@gmail.com, nickolayeva.t@gmail.com, Ivasivolha@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

The relevance of the topic is caused by searching for effective technologies and instruments of both psychological and pedagogical spheres in the field of methodology of teaching foreign languages in the higher educational establishments of Ukraine. It is based on the purpose to reach more productivity and results in mastering English by students for making them demanded specialists in modern multicultural world.

The main attention is focused on the problem of creating foreign language environment in educational process. The purpose of using this teaching approach is to increase students' motivation to study foreign languages, reveal their communicator's creative potential, and overcome possible psychological and language barriers during the process of gaining all the necessary skills in foreign language communicative competence, which is based on developing speaking skills due to practice in real-life circumstances.

The article reflects the problematic of such concepts as: "communicative competence", "foreign language communicative competence", "educational environment", "foreign language educational environment". The main components and functions of communicative competence are distinguished, as well as the key competences that form foreign language communicative competence to analyze the specifics of creating foreign language environment in educational process.

The research proves that learning foreign language is not only knowledge of lexical and grammatical structure of a language, but it is also necessary to solve the problem of removing psychological and cultural barriers and shocks that always arise in the process of entering a new linguistic and cultural environment community. And creating foreign language educational environment, as a teaching approach if made appropriately, is able to lead to real improving students' success at gaining or developing foreign language communicative competence.

**Keywords:** multicultural world; English as an international language; foreign language communicative competence; educational environment; psychological and cultural barriers.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ukraine's integration into the world community in a multicultural context is one of the leading vectors of Ukrainian modern foreign policy, aimed to establish closer economic, political and cultural worldwide ties with other countries. According to Y. Rybinska: "A deep understanding of integration as a phenomenon of the 21st century will provide a constructive understanding of the world as a whole. In addition, international integration will contribute to the important elements of social progress, such as interethnic public benefits and economic growth" (21). And such strategy leads to increasing need of using foreign language skills as the tools of direct establishing the necessary communication in various areas. Thus, mastering English as the recognized universal

language of communication in the world is considered to be one of the priority strategic guidelines at all levels of public education policy of Ukraine. So, not only specialized but also secondary and higher education institutions throughout Ukraine are actively involved in the Europeanization of education, focusing on increasing importance of effective studying the English language.

Unfortunately, according to the world statistics based on last researches (2015–2017), the average level of English knowledge in Ukraine is considered to be rather low (20): 89% of the Ukrainian respondents studied English, but only 18% speak it appropriately (13). That is, compared to European countries, Ukraine stays behind in the readiness of the population to communicate in a foreign language, so the task of modern and progressive teachers is to change this situation for the better. The insufficient level of foreign language proficiency is currently observed in non-specialized schools of Ukraine, which can cause a number of problems while working with such students at universities. That is why **the aim of this research** is to analyze the specifics of creating foreign language environment in educational process as one of the possible teaching methods of motivating and helping Ukrainian students to develop and improve their foreign language communicative competence.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the modern multicultural world, the goal of teaching foreign languages, including English as a world-known language of international communication, is: “the use of a foreign language as a tool in dialogue of cultures and civilizations of the modern world” (29). Undoubtedly, it forms the need for development of appropriate socio-cultural competence during foreign language studying. As it is known, foreign language communicative competence includes three main components: 1) **language competence** (phonetic, grammatical, lexical, spelling); 2) **speech competence** (in listening, speaking, reading and writing); 3) **socio-cultural competence**, which involves “acquaintance of learners with the national and cultural specifics of speech behavior and the ability to use elements of the socio-cultural context relevant to the generation and perception of speech from the point of view of native speakers. These elements are customs, rules, norms, social conventions, rituals, social stereotypes, knowledge of the country, etc.” (29). Thus, mastering socio-cultural competence as a necessary part of foreign language communicative competence involves acquisition of the required minimum of socio-cultural knowledge, as well as a system of skills and abilities to coordinate one’s behavior in accordance with this knowledge and skills. And creating foreign language environment in educational process may be a great helper for students to reach this aim due to making the real foreign atmosphere, which develops socio-cultural competence and improves students’ foreign language communicative competence while role-playing in class typical situations, which need effective communication for solving real-life tasks. And this becomes a great motivator for speaking practice, especially if there is no choice except using foreign language which is quite possible if foreign language environment is created in educational process for achieving better and faster learning results.

**Literature Review.** Currently, the modern education system is in the process of transformation processes: “One of the directions of reforming the education system in Ukraine should be directed at improving the level of professional competence of teachers, their knowledge, skills and abilities” (5). “Implementing successfully functioning models of joint educational programs and networking cooperation between universities” (9) throughout the world may also help to improve many aspects of educational process we have to deal with nowadays. And frequent changes in scientific paradigms and pedagogical technologies are inevitable, reflecting “rapid renewal of scientific knowledge system” (26). Probable changes in the content of pedagogical education can cause: “management of educational and pedagogical activities on the principles of dialogue and mutual respect; educational space as a culturally appropriate, multicultural environment; learning technologies as human-dimensional, innovative, value-oriented” (25). And, of course, these changes need relevant methods and forms of improving language competencies and diagnostic methods, such as: competence approach (23); problem-based learning (12); concept mapping (6); interactive technologies: interactive whiteboard (2), flipped classroom and other “digital learning framework offering a convergence of technological advancements with active and collaborative learning” (4). The choice of electronic educational resources as the main tool of independent work “improves the linguistic communicative competencies of students, activates their search, learning and self-organization; motivates to create their own educational trajectory, and improves the academic performance” (19). All these themes and other actual problems connected with effective ways of teaching and studying foreign languages, forming foreign language competence (1; 7; 14; 22; 30), deserve to be in the focus of the further detailed researches. This paper is aimed to reflect the main problems and specifics of forming foreign language communicative competence of students that teachers have to cope nowadays.

## RESULTS

It is known that from the standpoint of psychological comfort “the system of organization of training and employment, particularly, can be a traumatic factor for the health of students, which can lead to a decrease in their academic performance, deterioration of discipline, a state of anxiety. All this indicates the need for the

formation of a special environment, which would take into account students' learning difficulties and offer qualified support" (11). Therefore, progressive teachers always try to use a variety of technologies during their lessons to make learning more interesting and more productive. When we are dealing with foreign language teaching, such effective technology may be creating foreign language environment in educational process to help students overcome their possible problems in foreign speaking due to creating comfortable but authentic atmosphere in class. And the topics chosen for speaking practice should be interesting for students to provoke the desire to express their thoughts and exchange impressions, thus contributing to the main purpose of the subject – a practical application of language. So, to be effective, creating foreign language environment in educational process should include such necessary factors as: 1) friendly cooperation between teachers and students for creating comfortable atmosphere for resultative work; 2) using foreign language only or mostly for creating foreign language environment in educational process; 3) provocative, interesting for students topics, motivating them for speaking practice while discussing. All these factors, combined together, are able to promote the development of foreign language communicative competence, one of the key competences in the current strategic orientations in the sphere of education of Ukraine. And the teachers as the creative managers of their educative process are always those responsible for practical results of their students.

## DISCUSSIONS

Communication could be considered a system of relationships between young people, society and the environment: "It is no coincidence that today the problem of human relationships with other people and the environment is becoming increasingly relevant, one of the sides of which is direct communication in the real world" (3). The concept of "**communicative competence**" has a fairly wide range of definitions from "the ability to communicate, communicativeness, the ability of the individual to establish communicative contact with the environment" in the broad sense to more specific consideration of communicative competence as "the knowledge of cultural norms and rules of communication; possession of communication skills; system of internal means of regulation of communicative actions; set of skills and skills acquired, based on the individual experience that is implied decimal operational and technical means of communication" (10).

So, as to A. Korniyaka, communicative competence can be considered as "a complex organized, internally contradictory combination of communicative knowledge and skills reflecting the goals and results of the subject's communication activities" (10, p. 143). Thus, it allows to build the following model: communicative competence helps the subject to realize during the process of active communication such functions as communicative, perceptual and interactive due to combining three main groups of skills or abilities. They are: 1) communicative-speaking ability (decoding the received information and expressing thoughts verbally or in writing), 2) socio-perceptual ability (perception and understanding of other persons' feelings and ideas, mutual cognition and appreciation), 3) interactive ability (ability to organize, regulate interaction and mutual influence to reach interaction among all the participants) (10).

According to J. A. van Ek and J. L. M. Trim, the set of key components of "**foreign language communicative competence**" are the following: linguistic (knowledge of basic lexics and grammatical rules), social (desire and readiness to interact with others, ability to control and manage the situation), socio-linguistic (ability to use different skills according to a certain situation or context), socio-cultural (taking into consideration national and cultural features of native speakers, tolerate attitude towards foreign cultural mentality: traditions, stereotypes, behavioral peculiarities, etc.), discursive (ability to use word forms and semantic meaning in different contexts), strategic (use of verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies for compensation the possible problems with the lack of meaning or for enhancing the desired effect of the message) (28).

Analysis of psychological and pedagogical studies (L. Vygotsky, O. Izotova, O. Nikiforova and others) proved that communicative teaching methods promote self-esteem, reduce anxiety, teach students to get rid of negative emotions. And creating foreign language environment in educational process is very important as an effective method for learning and practising foreign languages skills. It can play a significant role in foreign language teaching, particularly in revealing the creative potential of students, enhancing their motivation for the learning process, and in overcoming their possible communication barriers, which contributes to the development of foreign language communicative competence as the main objective of teaching foreign languages. According to A. Korniyaka, the ability to establish and maintain contact with people, the ability to social-communicative adaptation, as well as the ability to change and control one's behavior in the context of multiplication of communication and problem situations is the condition of success for professional and personal lives: "The effectiveness of interacting with others is the ability to communicate. That is, the ability to engage in communication (communicative activity), requiring the subject of this activity to possess the instrument of its realization – competence in communication, or communicative competence" (10, p. 141).

And of course, for a modern specialist of any sphere, who desires to be successful in the chosen career, it is very important to become a good communicator, being able to use both native and foreign languages for solving different communicative tasks either working with domestic, or foreign partners. So, efficient knowledge of English as the universal world language can totally increase the cost of any specialist in Ukraine and abroad, as

well as bad knowledge of English can block development of any perspective career nowadays. Thus, forming of foreign communicative competence is so significant. Practice shows that students are more successful in mastering the material when they are interested in it. So, the choice of topics for interaction is also of great importance. This approach allows teachers to increase students' motivation and, as a consequence, to improve their performance.

The goal of interactive learning is "to create comfortable learning conditions in which each student can feel his success and intellectual competence, which will allow him to simulate life and professional situations from pedagogical practice, to find a solution to the problem based on an analysis of the circumstances and the corresponding situation; to contribute to the formation of professional skills and abilities, to cultivate humanistic values in him, help to create an atmosphere of interaction and cooperation" (8). Various forms of work, chosen for class interaction (project work, reports, role-playing, etc.), can develop both the skills of monologue expression (the ability to express student's own point of view) and the communication skills required to work in pairs, groups, teams, or to speak to an audience, which develops different types of communication. The communicative qualities, formed in these ways, make the communicative competence: "ability to establish contacts with others to solve certain communicative problems" (16), and in the case of learning foreign languages communicative competence is impossible without using a foreign language as a means of communication. That is why, creating foreign language environment in educational process is so important for giving great learning opportunities for real speaking practice during performing foreign communication.

**"Educational environment"** could be considered as "created conditions for subjects of the educational process for the purpose of pedagogical interaction, communication and cooperation, building partnership" (G. Tverdohlib) (27). And when we are talking about teaching foreign languages, we can't forget its main aim which is: "learning a foreign language should serve practical communicative goals – adequate communication in the language being studied with native speakers of this language and culture" (D. Litvinenko) (27). So, creating **"foreign language educational environment"**, we need to take into account the following: "Here in addition to knowledge lexical and grammatical structure of language, it is necessary to solve the problem of removing psychological and cultural barriers and shocks that arise in the process of entering a new linguistic and cultural environment community" (27, p. 462).

But learning a foreign language is always connected with a large number of mistakes (which, of course, is inevitable when mastering new skills), and participation in speech activities can become a major stress for students. Especially, for those who seek to meet the expectations of others and are afraid to fail (e.g., making mistakes when speaking foreign language). Thus, as the psychologists consider, the fear of error is natural for people with low self-esteem, usual self-doubt and high levels of anxiety, like people who experience psychological suffering in any situation related to the evaluation of their activities (17). Unfortunately, these psychological characteristics are inherent in a large number of students, which means that the fear of making mistakes may prevent the achievement of the main goal of the subject: if such students do not acquire foreign language skills, they will not learn how to use a foreign language for its intended purpose: as a means of communication for the establishment of foreign language communication. Taking into account all the above factors, it is important for teachers to find the necessary solutions so that the learning process can be fully implemented, minimizing the stressors that students may face in the process of communicating in a foreign language.

Obviously, mistakes can be called an integral and essential part of any learning process as the famous saying outlines: "Only he who does nothing is wrong". Moreover, it is mistakes that signal to students what they need to improve. That is why, the Finnish education system, which is considered to be one of the world's leading education systems (for PISA results), is based on the glorifying of mistakes, without which, in their opinion, it is impossible to move forward (18). But the mentality of Ukrainian citizens usually reacts quite unfavorably to the correction of mistakes, perceiving this as criticism of their own imperfections, that the Ego considers quite painful, so even constructive criticism can cause resentment, and because of this desire for resistance or self-closure (15).

The process of correcting mistakes as a rather intimate moment of penetration into the territory of another's Ego deserves special attention so as not to cross certain unauthorized boundaries, which can be blocked by openness, fear of mistakes and as a consequence: demotivation and deterioration of learning outcomes or stop. Thus, we conclude that the task of every teacher is constant work on creating a friendly educational environment in which students are not afraid to make mistakes in the process of their learning and development.

It is important to remember that you should not try to force low-level students who lack foreign language skills to speak, thereby provoking a possible increase in fear of making a mistake, which may make them even less willing to speak in the future. It is necessary to create such trusting and friendly learning conditions that students are not afraid to make mistakes and be ridiculed for it. The task of any foreign language teacher is to make it clear to their students that mistakes made in the process of acquiring new language skills should be seen as a great opportunity to gain knowledge or improve language skills. Students should respond to the many and inevitable mistakes, as if they are learning steps without which it would be impossible to improve their

knowledge of a foreign language. We all develop through mistakes – these are natural processes of cognition. It is important for students to realize that avoiding situations in which an error can occur would be the biggest mistake (15).

Obviously, the teacher must meet the needs of all his or her students, and groups are often mixed levels, so in the process of acquiring knowledge it is important to organize pair or group work so that students can learn from each other, that is why peer correction has become one of the most popular methods, which is used more often in the process of learning a foreign language nowadays. Recent surveys indicate that average students tend to react positively on peer-correction (24).

## CONCLUSION

As mastering foreign languages is now one of the priority tasks in the field of education in Ukraine, accordingly, it is the foreign language teachers who have the greatest responsibility for the success of this mission. It is extremely important to create a friendly atmosphere of trust and mutual assistance in the classroom, which helps to eliminate the fear of making mistakes, thus becoming a guarantee of success and effectiveness of the entire learning process. Both self-correction and the involvement of peers instead of the teacher in the process of correcting mistakes are additional effective tools for maintaining a favorable learning environment.

Therefore, we can conclude that creating foreign language environment in educational process as a teaching method has a significant impact on the psycho-physiological state of the individuals, helping to unlock creative potential, language intuition and empathic skills through the broadening of socio-cultural competence. And this helps a person to promote contacts with the outside world, including improving communicative skills, particularly by removing possible psychological barriers while using a foreign language as a means of communication, which is a real background for successful mastering any foreign language. Thus, this method, which must be regulated by the teacher as the facilitator of the whole process, can be considered as a rather effective technology that needs further research and which should be actively used in the pedagogical process, when we are dealing with teaching of foreign languages, especially in higher educational establishments of Ukraine. It is undoubtedly able to promote students' motivation to learn foreign languages, but the development of foreign language communicative competence may be observed only if this means active involvement of all the participants: both teachers and students.

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