

Poly-/Multiculturality in Higher Education: Methodological Level of the Research Concept



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ABSTRACT: The article looks into the contemporary challenges for higher education in the era of unexpected global turbulences following the processes of globalisation not only in the social, political, economic and financial contexts but also in the educational domain. Multidimensional reality has brought its changes to communication and risen the standards of effective communication much higher than forecast in the previous years. The global developments drive for efficiency in intercultural dialogue, which causes reconsideration of the lingual status of education in multinational classrooms. The burning issues arise more sharply for cross border communication for business and diplomacy purposes. It means that a high demand in the educational market for LSP instructors (LSP – languages for specific purposes) at philology departments in Ukraine and abroad has started moving higher education to become more business oriented and stakeholder and university partnered. That said, it is necessary to analyse the existing foundations for poly- / multiculturality in higher education as supported by governments and the government of Ukraine, in particular, as well as go deeper into the levels of the research concept, the methodological level, to be more precise.

As part of the research, the paper describes the key methodological approaches to foster and cultivate poly- / multiculturality in multi-dimensional classrooms – polylingual and multicultural. Such approaches are viewed fundamental to educate high-class LSP instructors in the field of foreign language instruction and acquisition in higher education. Among them are the systemic approach including the structural one, the synergic approach to cultivate poly- / multiculturality with future LSP educators in foreign language classrooms, cross-cultural approach, axiological and communicative approaches, environmental and reflexive approaches, etc.

KEYWORDS: Methodology, Polyculturality, Multiculturality, Polylingualism, LSP, Future LSP Teachers / Educators.

INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization, intensification of intercultural contacts of representatives of different countries, new trends are arising in the development of the world community within the framework of either poly-culturalism or multiculturalism, tolerance of cultural diversity and cultural characteristics of other peoples. Increasingly enough, these trends are manifested in the content plane of the youth upbringing and education of the younger generation in schools and high schools.

In the context of global integration of cultures of different countries, growing mobility of the world, expanding employment, tourism, personal and business contacts with foreign partners, fluency in several foreign languages becomes a vital necessity, which poses new challenges to pedagogy, the formation of poly- / multicultural and polylingual personality of a modern specialist in higher education. In this regard, some of the important tasks of universities are: (i) to expand the poly- / multicultural components of the content of higher education, (ii) to increase the requirements for future professionals to master the world cultural heritage and master foreign languages to enjoy communication at a sufficient level. The other challenge may accompany with acquisition / instruction of languages for specific purposes (LSP) in higher education [11; 12]. It is stated that mastery of a foreign language provides direct access to the culture and social experience of other peoples, as well as provides for the implementation of learning the dialogue of cultures into the educational process, opens broader opportunities for intercultural interaction inside and outside the classroom.

The relevance of this study explicitly connects to its purpose and reveals importance of the communication driven polyculturality / multi-culturality in a diversified LSP classroom, significance of polylinguality of LSP students, and the methodological approaches based on reflexion which may influence the poly- / multicultural stance of intercultural communication in higher education in Ukraine and the world. Therefore, it is found necessary to follow which normative acts and local regulations in Ukraine facilitate research and highlight the perspectives of higher education in the future in the light of linguistic and cultural tolerance, demonstrating respect for cultural diversity in polylingual classrooms, especially business content oriented. That would allow to design the properties assigned to an expert in philology and qualified LSP teacher in a polylingual multinational classroom. These characteristics of professional knowledge and expertise may become key to foster poly- / multiculturality of LSP teachers

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graduates from the beginning of study in high school. Next, they will help these future LSP instructors cultivate such qualities within their capabilities for personal growth and in order to help implement the set governmental standards for Ukraine's strategy implementation in the area of higher education. From a methodological viewpoint, these are several approaches to be discussed in the paper for fostering and cultivating poly- / multiculturalism with future LSP educators, deemed to complement each other. Among the most applicable are such as culturological, axiological, environmental, cross-cultural, reflexive approaches, in particular, and even more without limitations.

POLY-/MULTICULTURALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: WITHIN AND OUTSIDE UKRAINE

The challenges for higher education in Ukraine and globally in the times of changes arrange in to some distinct shapes and scholars discuss them either one by one or via a comprehensive lens. Thus, according to the set objectives of the research, some of the educational issues result in the analysis and relevant reflections within a number of normative documents, for instance:

- (a) Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education",
- (b) Law of Ukraine "On Academic, and Scientific and Technical Activity",
- (c) Decree by President of Ukraine "On Improving Higher Education in Ukraine" dated as of 03 July 2020 and registered under no 210 / 2020,
- (d) Relevant instructions by Prime Minister of Ukraine – to be more exact, these are no 23502/2 / 1-20 as of 12 June 2020 and no 23502/3 / 1-20 s of 13 June 2020, correspondingly,
- (e) Decree by President of Ukraine "On the goals of sustainable development of Ukraine for the period until 2030" as of 30 September 2019, no 722/2019,
- (f) Acts by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine,
- (g) Strategy of national-patriotic education for 2020-2025, as well as
- (h) Strategy for the development of higher education in Ukraine for 2021-2031.

By mentioning the above documents, it is not intended to underline that the Ukrainian government is striving hard to design new policies and start implementation after the pilot launches. It is worthy to note that the European documents and other normative acts, adopted as best practices by the global community, may serve in higher education

- (i) To highlight the importance of respect, dignity and tolerance among nations and peoples across the geographies,
- (ii) To teach and promote acceptance for cultural and linguistic diversity, and
- (iii) To account for integrative globalization effects in the east and west, north and south.

For example, The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2010) states that cultural diversity is an integral feature of humankind, and that the encouragement of respect for national and foreign cultures of each nation is determined by the global education strategy of the 21st century. Moreover, according to the UNESCO, "the adoption of the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was a milestone in international cultural policy". It is underlined further that following the historic agreement, "the global community formally recognised the dual nature, both cultural and economic, of contemporary cultural expressions produced by artists and cultural professionals. Shaping the design and implementation of policies and measures that support the creation, production, distribution of and access to cultural goods and services, the 2005 Convention is at the heart of the creative economy" [22].

There is a long line and chronology of international acts, which focus on and advance the values rooted in intercultural communication. Among such it may be relevant to mention the below:

- (a) Recommendations by the Council of Europe on language education, principles of the Bologna Declaration,
- (b) Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020),
- (c) 2020 Rome Communiqué Annex I - Statement on Academic Freedom (2020),
- (d) 2020 Rome Communiqué Annex II - Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA (2020),
- (e) 2020 Rome Communiqué Annex III - Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA,
- (f) "Intercultural competence for all: Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world" printed at the Council of Europe (2012),
- (g) "Developing Intercultural Competence through Education", Council of Europe (2013), etc.

The Ministers responsible for higher education in relevant states when meeting in Rome for Rome Ministerial Communiqué in November 2020 to celebrate the achievements of the 21 years since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, reaffirmed their commitment to "developing a more inclusive, innovative, interconnected and resilient European Higher Education Area (EHEA)" [18, p. 3]. The EHEA is a unique cooperation, in which all the member states recognize trust as a cornerstone for public authorities and higher education stakeholders, under the concepts of which the global stakeholders work together "to define and achieve shared goals". It is underlined that with the diversity of "cultures, languages and environments, and ... shared commitment to quality,

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transparency and mobility, higher education systems offer unequalled opportunities for learning, teaching, research and innovation” [18, p. 3]. Therefore, the EU strives for the shared goals and outcomes speak by themselves of the social needs for fostering and cultivation of poly- / multiculturalism in higher education.

Another document is “2020 Rome Communiqué Annex I - Statement on Academic Freedom”. This Rome Communiqué defines the concept of academic freedom as “a distinct, fundamental democratic right in part grounded in the right to education, and shares elements with freedom of thought, opinion and expression”, which may not but take place via communication in a poly- / multicultural democratic environment, in which the linguistic and cultural tolerance is of the utter value [29, p. 2]. Based on such fundamentals of multidimensional communication, academic freedom embodies into the highest standards of higher education in the form of “an indispensable aspect of quality learning, teaching and research” [29, p. 2]. To implement the desired goals, expressed in the document, it is believed that with the focus on advanced poly- / multicultural and polylingual higher education, academics and students may exchange their freedom of thought in multinational classrooms without any obstacles. They may transmit and share the knowledge easily and with confidence that everybody contributes to the world by making it a better place of living for the general good. Polylingual and poly- / multicultural classrooms may easily provide the freedom to communicate the results of academic and scientific research within and outside of the framework of academic institutions and programmes [29, p. 2].

Another 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué – Annex II includes two relevant parts for higher educational sector. The first section discusses the principles and guidelines, which aim to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA. The following part provides the glossary of terms and definitions, which may serve a bright polycultural example of the shared vision for effective communication in many languages rather than a legal tool for governing laws in respective jurisdictions: EN *underrepresented students*, EN *disadvantaged students* and EN *vulnerable students* [30, p. 9].

The concept unveiling in the definition of the underrepresented students may undoubtedly apply not only to the higher education in the countries EU member states, but also stretch far beyond. Thus, EN *underrepresented students* ‘a group of learners is underrepresented in relation to certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age, nationality, geographic origin, socio-economic background, ethnic minorities) if its share among the students is lower than the share of a comparable group in the total population’. These days thanks to the academic mobility, many students may travel and obtain a degree in a country other than their country of origin. It may be challenging enough, especially when such students come from the developing world or belong to some indigenous groups of society. As clearly stated in the document, ‘individuals usually have several underrepresented characteristics, which is why combinations of underrepresented characteristics (“intersectionality”) should always be considered’ [30, p. 9].

From the university perspective, in particular, the mentioned underrepresentation can also influence design and application of a certain study programme, choice of faculty and department, college, high school, etc., and it definitely will bring its implications to the entire higher education system in the polycultural and polylingual contexts.

Next, the concept of the disadvantaged students under Annex II of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué relates to specific challenge under which disadvantages students may encounter as compared to their peers in higher education. This can include “disability, low family income, little or no family support, orphan, many school moves, mental health, pregnancy, having less time to study because one has to earn one’s living by working or having caring duties” [30, p. 9]. The document lays down that these disadvantages may vary in time length, as well as disadvantaged students can be part of an underrepresented group. This phenomenon is becoming socially sharp in many European and non-European countries when very smart students from poor families, disabled students and so on, seek some government support to enter a high school of their choice, or a grant, or a scholarship, which is not always easy.

Another category of the students as defined in Annex II of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué is about vulnerable students: These students:

“may be at risk of disadvantage and in addition have special (protection) needs. For example, because they suffer from an illness (including mental health) or have a disability, because they are minors, because their residence permit depends on the success of their studies (and thus also on decisions made by individual teachers), because they are at risk of being discriminated against. These learners are vulnerable in the sense that they may not be able to ensure their personal well-being, or that they may not be able to protect themselves from harm” [30, p. 9].

Multicultural / polycultural classrooms in higher educational institutions may provide for implementation of the ideas and concepts designated in the Bologna Process and Annexes I and II of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué [21; 29; 30].

More recommendations to national authorities in the European Union aim at the enhancement of higher education in the context of learning and teaching in the EHEA as they are set out in 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué – Annex III. That said, “The context of the Covid-19 health crisis further underlines the importance of the Group’s recommendations in several regards” [31, p. 3]. It becomes especially important to focus on the need for “pedagogical innovation and further development of online education and open educational resources, as well as that on strengthening the link between educational research and teaching” [31, p. 3].

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The polyculturality in higher education unveils in the expression of the recommendations, which underline the contemporary educational need for student-centred learning, “the enhancement of teaching, and the overarching importance of national and international dialogue involving all stakeholders” [31, p. 3].

It should be noted that either it is about the educational paradigm in Ukraine in the times of pandemic, crisis, and post-crisis, or it is about the educational processes abroad – the EU, Asia, Africa, Australia and Americas: it is critical to enhance teaching the classrooms to engage in intercultural dialogues, in which the national and the international would integrate into effective communication – via tolerance and wisdom.

In particular, it is found that among the main goals of education and upbringing is the formation of “national and religious tolerance, respect for languages, traditions and culture of other peoples”, “culture of peace and interpersonal relations”, “development of culture of interethnic relations”. Without solving the problem of multicultural and polycultural education and upbringing it is impossible to fully set and solve the problem of modernization of education, spiritual and moral development and education of the individual citizen of our country, preparing the younger generation for intercultural interaction in complex social relations of the modern world.

The issues of educating and cultivating poly- / multiculturalism of future LSP teachers of modern languages is also closely related to the tasks of national-patriotic and international education. These are enshrined in a number of documents:

- The Concept of civic education of the individual in the development of the Ukrainian statehood;
- The Concept of national education of student youth;
- The Concept of national-patriotic education of youth;
- The Guidelines for the organization of educational work in educational institutions, which in particular states that the professional education of future professionals in the context of intercultural dialogue is one of the priority areas in the educational process of higher education, due to the main factors of this process.

Moving further, science has developed a significant potential needed to solve this problem:

- Many scholars determine and explore the philosophical essence of intercultural communication and intercultural competence in culturological, pedagogical, linguodidactic discourse (Bakhtin, 2012; Bibler, 1990; Safonova, 2001; Cross, 2013; Duff, 2015; Brooks, 2019) [4;7; 19; 13; 12; 9].

- Even more academics investigate and analyse the theoretical aspects of multicultural education are revealed (Vertovec, 2009; Zhyrun, 2016; Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier & Pens, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 2013, etc.) [25; 28; 27; 20].

- The topics of linguistic aspects of polylingual and bilingual personality, the problem of reflecting the linguistic picture of the world in the linguistic consciousness of personality are revealed in Bolotin & Burnaford (1994), Turner & Cross (2016), Atkinson, Byrnes, Doran, Duff, Ellis, Hall, Tarone (2016), etc. [8; 23; 1].

- Vereshchagin & Kostomarov (1990), Vitvytska (2015), Bekh (2001) and many others developed linguistic and cultural, ethical and value determinants of multicultural education [24; 26; 6].

However, despite the significant interest of scientists in the studied phenomenon, the problem of educating culture for future teachers of philology and LSP teachers in particular, has not yet acquired a holistic scientific understanding.

Therefore, the methodology of education of poly- / multiculturalism is challenging a planetary quality formation of a teacher in the field of philology as a poly- / multicultural and polylingual personality, substantiation of theoretical principles of education of poly- / multiculturalism, study of its structural components, pedagogical conditions, pedagogical technology of education of multiculturalism of students during foreign language education in modern universities

METHODOLOGICAL LEVEL OF THE RESEARCH CONCEPT

The main conceptual idea of the study is that modern socio-economic, political and spiritual development of society requires not only a highly educated, competent specialist, but also an educated person with a high level of culture, value consciousness, creative activity, capable of intercultural communication, tolerant to other native speakers and their culture. Thus, the research concept is substantiated at the methodological, theoretical and practical levels.

The methodological level reflects the relationship of scientific approaches: system-synergetic approach in the combination with the culturological, communicative and environmental approaches to the study of the problem.

It is found that the system approach allows to identify components of the pedagogical system of formation and development of poly- / multicultural, as well as polylingual personality of the future teacher in the fields of philology and LSP training.

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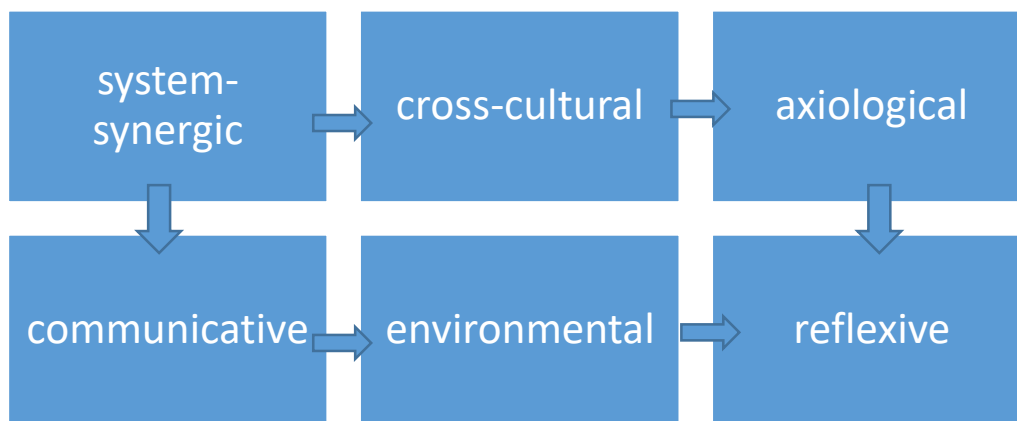


Fig. 1 Approaches to grow and cultivate a poly-/multicultural LSP instructor in higher education

The synergetic approach considers the process of education of poly- / multiculturalism of the future contexts, which allows for the process of educating the poly- / multiculturalism of the future teacher in the LSP domain of modern languages. That becomes possible with a focus on relevant linguistic and cultural significance and allows enabling future LSP instructors to adjust to the following:

- self-development,
- self-education,
- self-realization,

Necessary for the formation of a bilingual or polylingual personality in the poly- / multicultural classrooms.

The cross-cultural approach focuses on teaching and education in the context of intercultural dialogue, which involves the development of didactic-methodological and organizational-educational conditions for comparative humanistically oriented co-study of foreign and native cultures in the formation of communicative skills of intercultural communication, tolerant attitude to other cultures.

The axiological approach in higher education determines the value basis of national and universal self-affirmation of multicultural personality of a teacher of modern languages, internalization of values of native and foreign culture, which forms a positive national identity, awakens the desire to consider the interests of multicultural society and take into account the interests of every citizen.

The communicative approach covers cognitive, developmental, educational aspects of the foreign culture; contributes to the formation of a poly- / multicultural personality of the future LSP teacher of modern languages by means of foreign language instruction and acquisition, and is to ensure the establishment of a constructive intercultural dialogue.

The environmental approach defines a higher pedagogical educational institution as a cultural and educational space, an innovative language environment with dialogic interaction, as a socio-cultural phenomenon in which the ideal of the future LSP teacher is constructed as a model of polylingual and poly- / multicultural personality.

The formation of the poly- / multicultural personality of the future pedagogue who is trained to be a philologist is inextricably linked with the processes of comprehension, awareness, and the formation of their own personal values to knowledge and culture, their own activities, i.e. with the process of reflection. In this regard, reflexive thinking comes to the fore, and its formation and development become important tasks of all levels of education in general and foreign language education in particular.

The basics of reflective methodology were formed in the 1980-90s. There are various schools and areas related to the study of reflection, when the subject of research and experimental activities is the design of reflective and innovative environments with dialogic and polylogical interaction of the subjects of the educational process, ensuring the development of personality.

Such a reflexive approach as a methodology of pedagogical activity was considered in the researches by Korthagen (2001), Kelesi (1996), Kondratets (2013), etc. [16; 14; 15].

The key concepts of the reflexive approach are such as “reflection”, “reflexive position”, “reflexive skills”. The analysis of researches of various scientific schools allows to draw a conclusion that while there is no uniform definition of reflection, especially in pedagogical researches. Philosophical and encyclopedic dictionaries define reflection as a form of human activity of socially developed man, aimed at understanding all their own actions and their laws; reflection is an activity of self-knowledge, which reveals the specifics of the spiritual world of man [17].

According to Korthagen, reflection is a mental process aimed at structuring or restructuring experience, problem or existing knowledge or ideas [16, p. 37]. Based on the studied material, reflection is associated the following: the processes of production of new meanings; the processes of objectification of meanings in the form of knowledge, objects and objects of activity; the specific functioning of this knowledge, subjects of study and objects of practical activity.

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An important concept of the reflexive approach is the problem situation; it arises in the presence of several, sometimes mutually exclusive provisions for the evaluation of both the problem itself and the ways of its evaluation and solution. This provision allows to determine the following requirements for the organization of the educational process, which ensures the formation of a poly- / multicultural personality of students - future LSP teachers of foreign languages. In order to form the ability to solve problems independently, it is necessary to model problem situations and form appropriate algorithms of action at all stages of foreign language education. To do this, it is necessary to analyze different views within the problem situation, which contributes to a better understanding of knowledge.

The process of reflection itself contributes to the search for alternative actions associated with the ability to design activities, which in turn creates the need to obtain new and update previously acquired knowledge, integration of knowledge and ways to use them in different situations. So, reflection results in a production of new meanings and their objectification in the form of a new idea and algorithms of its realization. Therefore, the process of educating the poly- / multicultural personality is inextricably linked with reflexive processes, with the formation of a reflexive attitude to linguo-cultural knowledge, as well as to himself as a subject of activity. Thus, the main ideas of the reflective approach and its main categories (reflection, reflective position, reflective skills) should be taken into account in developing the concept of educating poly- / multiculturalism of future foreign language teachers.

In view of this, the process of learning another culture is modeled as a process of cultural reflection. Cultural reflection must be organized on the basis of problematic situations of cultural nature so that the future teacher can reflect on himself / herself, his / her culture, values of his / her and other culture, his / her activities and form a reflective attitude to knowledge, values, activities, to himself / herself as a subject of culture and activities. The ability to identify common intersocial values would lead to their formation with relevant students for poly- / multicultural classrooms in future.

CONCLUSION

These days more and more students and business people start looking for ways for master foreign languages at the highest levels of their linguistic competence, paying much attention to future growths in professional careers. In order to facilitate student and staff mobility, to make higher education more inclusive and accessible, governments in Europe (the EU, the UK, Ukraine, in particular) and those in Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South Americas are striving hard to make higher education more attractive and competitive worldwide.

Therefore, the questions of poly- and multiculturalism have come up to the top. Diversity in cultures and languages is pushing to creating international classrooms, in which of utter value is everything – ability to communicate with each other effectively, tolerance to culture, language, race, religion, and so on. The burning need in high quality educators in higher education has shifted the focus to the interdisciplinary field. It is not only the linguistic competence that matters, but also the expert field, which horizons in a globalising world are getting broader day by day. To this end, future teachers of languages are required to obtain and possess a good bunch of other skills and competencies. Firstly, a need in a teacher of languages of specific purposes (LSP instructor) is driving the educational market to consider another job title on the nomenclature list in Ukraine in higher education. Secondly, it is the poly- / multicultural society, which starts looking for more and demanding more. Such LSP instructors should be also competent in foreign language instruction and help domestic and international students gain knowledge and skills in the selected languages. That is why, by carrying out main performance in a poly- / multicultural classroom, polyculturality and multiculturalism as part of the LSP teacher's character would become prerequisite. To grow and cultivate poly- / multiculturalism with future LSP teachers, the methodological framework presupposes application of such approaches as system synergic approach, culturological and axiological approaches in higher education, cross-cultural and communicative approaches, environmental and reflexive ones. The list can grow longer. However, the mentioned approaches are seen fundamental to establish the proper educationally structured framework for due knowledge, skills and competencies of future LSP teachers in the field of foreign language instruction and acquisition.

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