

**V. O. Vukolova,**  
*Vinnitsia Institute of Trade and Economics KNUTE, Vinnitsia*

## TRANSLATORS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AS A CRUCIAL FACTOR OF SUCCESSFUL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

*У статті досліджуються особливості міжкультурної комунікації у розрізі перекладацької практики. Перекладач вважається фахівцем, який виконує не тільки «класичний» переклад з однієї мови на іншу, а й здійснює міжкультурну комунікацію, чії професійні здібності удосконалюються завдяки поглибленому вивченню інших культур, спілкуванню з їх представниками. Особливу увагу приділено питанням, пов'язаним з «зонами чутливості» в різних світових культурах, які впливають на процес перекладу.*

**Ключові слова:** міжкультурна комунікація, міжкультурна компетенція, переклад, культура, мультикультурні дослідження.

*В статье изучаются особенности межкультурной коммуникации в разрезе переводческой практики. Переводчик рассматривается как специалист, который выполняет не только «классический» перевод с одного языка на другой, но и участвует в процессе межкультурной коммуникации, чьи профессиональные способности совершенствуются благодаря углубленному изучению других культур, общению с их представителями. Особое внимание уделяется вопросам, посвященным «зонам чувствительности» в разных мировых культурах, которые оказывают влияние на процесс перевода.*

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная компетенция, перевод, культура, мультикультурные исследования.

*The article studies some peculiarities of intercultural communication in frames of the process of translation. The translator is described as a specialist who performs not only the translation in a traditional meaning but also acts interculturally, whose profession evolves around cultures and communication between persons belonging to different cultures. Major emphasis is put on sensitivity areas of cultures around the world and their impact on the process of translation.*

**Key words:** intercultural communication, intercultural competence, translation, culture, multicultural studies.

**Introduction.** No doubt, all living cultures are outcomes of intercultural communication. This becomes particularly evident in the globalization era where the ever-fast evolving cultural landscape is characterized by an intensified diversity of peoples, communities and individuals who live more and more closely. Today we live in an age when all inhabitants are interconnected; this makes it absolutely critical to learn to understand people whose background is different from your own. With or without our consent the last five decades have thrust us into social and professional situations with people who often appear alien, exotic, and perhaps even wondrous. These people may live thousands of miles away or right next door.

**The topicality of the article.** Globalization shrinks the world, bringing a wider range of cultures into closer contact than ever before. Inevitably, cultural boundaries are shifting, therefore the pace of social transformations is increasing. As a result, cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become facts of modern life.

The increasing diversity of cultures, which is fluid, dynamic and transformative, implies specific competences and capacities for individuals and societies to learn, re-learn, and unlearn so as to meet personal fulfillment and social harmony. Nowadays, multicultural studies are on the rise in Ukraine, just as they are in other countries, where multicultural contacts have engendered both a multicultural and multilingual society. Although during the last years these studies in Ukraine were considered mainly from a social and political perspective, they are having certain repercussions on literary and educational fields as well. According to Canadian experts, multiculturalism is based on the belief that cultural diversity is beneficial for any society. Thus the philosophy behind it consists of creating a suitable environment where different cultures respect, value and mutually support one another [6, p. 277].

Another interesting point concerning terms «multiculturalism» and «pluralism» is that made by Giovanni Sartori in his controversial book «Pluralismo, multiculturalismo e estranei» (2001). According to him, multiculturalism, as applied in the USA and which resulted in the unsuccessful experiment called the «melting pot», highlighted differences between cultures and ethnic groups, producing closed circles within society. However, pluralism is based on tolerance and recognizing the value of diversity [6, p. 277].

It is a challenge – to become an effective and successful intercultural communicator when you interact with neighbors who might speak a strange language. To be successful in these interactions in this new world you must be able to communicate with people whose entire backgrounds, whose way of viewing the world and doing things may be completely different from yours. Functioning in this new world means that you understand the theories, principles and dynamics of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is the circumstance in which people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact with each other.

With the heightened profile of language learning in a global community, language education is exploring a new model of intercultural language learning and teaching. The goal of intercultural language learning is to produce language users equipped with explicit skills in understanding connections and differences between their own culture and the culture of the target language [5, p. 2].

Today, however, scholars in translation studies seem to take a greater interest in communication and culture than linguistic issues as such: translation is seen rather as action between cultures than between languages [6, p. 279]. Up until today, students studying translation have been taught that as culture is the central issue in translating they should be not only bilingual but bicultural. Cultural references usually pose greater difficulties for translators than mere lin-

guistic problems, since translators have to overcome cultural barriers, a task at which they have to be more creators than transcribers. Of the many factors that may lead to misreadings in translation, cultural presuppositions merit special attention from translators because they can substantially and systematically affect their interpretation of facts and events in the source text without their even knowing it. It causes the necessity of getting new types of knowledge – the competence in intercultural competence.

**The previous studies.** Over the last ten years there has been considerable attention to language education, but the problem of the competence in intercultural communication remains one of the relevant and unsolved. Intercultural competence is the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures. A person who is interculturally competent captures and understands in interaction with people from foreign cultures, their specific concepts in perception, thinking, feeling and acting. Linguists study this process from the position of interrelation of language and culture. Psychologists studying the problems of intercultural communication pay special attention to the cognitive resources of discourse activity and describe special features of cognition. And, as T. G. Bortnikova notices, all these studies have unacceptable influence on the methods and methodology of the intercultural competence development as immanent condition in solving the problem [4, p. 475].

**The aim of the article** is to describe the translator as a specialist who acts interculturally, whose profession evolves around cultures and communication between persons belonging to different cultures and to highlight the importance of intercultural competence for the successful intercultural communication process.

**Discussion.** As it known, the basis of the intercultural competence is the background knowledge of an educated person of a certain lingua-cultural society. An effective approach to language learning and teaching which highlights an intercultural perspective is important in the development of all language students. A. Wierzbicka writes: «It is increasingly acknowledged that cross-cultural learning, and the ways of speaking associated with different languages and cultures need to be properly described, understood, and taught» [7, p. 735].

Intercultural communication means taking on roles, switching between a variety of identities in different culture-specific situations. The crucial element in this form of communication is culture and the impact it has on our communicative behavior. Culture strongly influences our beliefs, values and world views, it is reflected in our use of language, our nonverbal behavior and how we relate to others. It shapes our relationships with our family and friends, it teaches us how to raise our children, and provides us with prescriptions for forms of communication appropriate to a variety of social situations. The researches mention that people nowadays often construct their individual repertoire of behaviour out of two or more cultural systems [2, p. 812]. For many people it is no longer that easy to draw a clear line between original and target cultures.

Communication is always culture-specific, that no perception of and reflection on something can be impartial. Translators/interpreters perform the function of an intercultural mediator by questioning given aspects in any culture and trying to break free of their culturally bound position. Culture learners and teachers as well as translators must act as intercultural communication experts. The translator/interpreter should be trained to mediate between cultures in real life situations, i. e. should obtain academic training based not so much on linguistic exercises in a vacuum-like classroom situation but shaped by an interactionist approach.

Arthur H. Bell in his «Business Communication: Process and Practice» underlines the following eleven sensitivity areas of cultures around the world [3, p. 488-489]:

1. How do men relate to women, and women to men? Though you may not agree on the fairness of relations between the sexes in other cultures, simply knowing their ground rules helps you avoid disastrous social and business pitfalls.

2. How does the culture indicate respect? Consider the roles of silence, direct questions, seating arrangements, eye contact, gestures, gifts, compliments, and invitations.

3. How does the culture view human time and space? Does an appointment at 7 p. m. mean «7 sharp» or «sevenish» or, as in some Latin countries, around 8? What of space? Should you stand a bit closer to Frenchmen than you are used to standing to Americans?

4. What are strict taboos in the culture? Is alcohol, for example, accepted, winked at, or absolutely unthinkable?

5. How are business commitments made in the culture? Try to establish in advance the words and actions in the culture that will let you know your deal is moving forward to commitment.

6. What nonverbal cues are used in the culture to pass information to you, or to pass private understanding between members of the culture?

7. What words can you learn to indicate your interest in another culture? The whole matter of language and translation bears looking into before entering upon relations in another culture.

8. How should one dress for business and social occasions in the host country? Before «going native» in dress, consider the risks of losing your identity as a foreign visitor and hence your immunity to some forms of criticism.

9. How do your foreign hosts reason? This rather large question can be dealt with in practical, not philosophical, ways.

10. What aspects of the host country's religious or political life must be understood for effective relations?

11. What prejudices against you and your country must you overcome in the culture? You may have to exert your imagination and energies to show yourself as you are, not as you are thought to be.

In this case we are talking about allusion or reference to a more generalised kind of cultural information, the so-called 'cultural stereotypes'. These are beliefs, values, attitudes or principles specific to a certain national, rather than the international, community. Cultural stereotypes are usually intimately connected with the country's history, economy, and politics, and are the products thereof. They can be more or less general in themselves, that is, they can also be seen as a multi-level structure [1, p. 5].

As to prejudices, they include both positive and negative ones on at least three levels: prejudices about their own culture, about the other, about what one thinks the other thinks of one's own culture. These three levels of 'images' determine any communication with and perception of the other within and between cultures, and must necessarily be taken into consideration when reflecting upon the constituents of the professional translator's cultural competence.

The specialists describe the translator as a professional who acts interculturally rather than merely possesses the abstract knowledge of this acting. In this context, the nonverbal and behavioural aspects of this acting play a very important role. The following list shows central ways in which cultures can differ [3, p. 492-494]:

- 1) greetings – appropriate or inappropriate gestures (such as handshake or touching), verbal greetings (what to say), how close together persons stand when greeting or conversing, conversation topics, etc. ;
- 2) visiting a family at home – what should and should not be done in the following situations: greeting, entering the house, gifts and flowers, etc. ;
- 3) talks, speeches and public addresses to groups of people (subjects of topics which these people are especially fond of or those which should not be referred to);
- 4) meetings – punctuality, best ways to begin and end the meeting, seating arrangement, eye contact;
- 5) gestures – those which help to carry a message and those which should be avoided;
- 6) personal appearance – clothing, eye glasses and sun glasses, hats and other;
- 7) general attitudes of adults (male and female), teenagers (male and female) about nature and man's role in it, society, wealth, clothes, giving and receiving criticism, education;
- 8) language – dialects, use of English, etc. ;
- 9) religion – general attitudes toward religion, predominant beliefs;
- 10) special holidays – specific days and how these holidays are celebrated;
- 11) the family – average size of family, attitudes about the family and its role in society, teenagers' role in the family, etc. ;
- 12) dating and marriage customs – attitude about marriage, engagement customs, prerequisites to marriage (such as completion of education or financial independence), desirability of children (birth control), attitude about divorce;
- 13) social and economic levels – including size of different classes, average income and what it provides for the family, general housing conditions and possessions;
- 14) distribution of group – rural or urban, what cities or areas, group population for areas concerned and what ratio group population is to total population in these areas;
- 15) work – the economy of the group (what are the main occupations of the people, industries, and important products?), individual work schedules, age at which people begin working, choosing a job;
- 16) diet – average diet, size of meals when they are eaten, special foods which are usually given to guests;
- 17) recreation, sports, arts, music, leisure time – family and individual cultural and physical recreation and sports activities, distinctive arts of the culture which a visitor should know about;
- 18) history and government – history of the group, including facts and events considered most important by the people and why, heroes, leaders of the group and why they are esteemed;
- 19) education – education in the group, any private education systems within the group;
- 20) transportation and communication systems – their use and significance to the group, mass communication, individual interpersonal communication;
- 21) health, sanitation, medical facilities – including general attitude about disease;
- 22) land and climate – including geographical effects on the history of the group, problems posed today by the geography or climate where these people are located;
- 23) «universal» signals or non-verbal cues a newcomer should know that indicate approval or disapproval, acceptance or rejection in this society.

This list is a partial summary of some aspects of culture which can unite people who share the same basic attitudes, backgrounds, and lifestyles. Since these characteristics can vary widely between cultures they can be a source of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

The following question needs to be asked: how has intercultural education been implemented in those countries which are already ahead of us in this particular field? Many schools, clubs, and organizations provide cultural awareness training (in the USA – Overseas Briefing Associates, The Business Council for International Understanding, The Intercultural Communications Network). The interpreter should be trained as an intercultural communication expert whose profession evolves around cultures and communication between persons belonging to different cultures. Culture should be taken as anything that translators and interpreters as researches of culture and experts for intercultural communication should know and feel concerning their source and target cultures.

**Conclusion.** Major emphasis must be put on close contacts and exchanges with members of the cultures concerned in multicultural working groups and during longer stays in those cultures. As a result the translator should know how to act in cultures according to and/or against the norms, rules, conventions, etc. While 'learning' a culture and later on when communicating with its members the translator should approach the members of this culture with the tools of cultural relativism as a remedy against ethnocentrism and prejudices. Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other words, abilities to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Nevertheless, given their relevance for social and political life, the scope of intercultural competences is much wider than formal education. We have to reach out to a new generation of translators who have unimagined opportunities for global conversations. All this implies preparing our future generations to become citizens of a new society where it is possible «to distinguish without discriminating».

**References:**

1. Голубина К. В. Лингвострановедение Великобритании и США / К. В. Голубина. – М. : МГЛУ, 2002. – 138 с.
2. Bahadır Ş. Moving In-Between: The Interpreter as Ethnographer and the Interpreting-Researcher as Anthropologist / Şebnem Bahadır // *Meta*. – 2004. – XLIX, № 4. – P. 805–821.
3. Bell A. H. Business Communication: Process and Practice / Arthur H. Bell. – London : Scott, Foresman and Company, 1987. – 601 p.
4. Bortnikova T. G. Development of Intercultural Competence through Students' Socio-Cultural Activity / T. G. Bortnikova // *Вестник ТГТУ*. – 2013. – Т. 19, № 2. – С. 475–480.
5. Moloney R. A. Intercultural Competence in Young Language Learners: a case study [Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of doctor of Education, at the University of Sydney, September 2007] / Robyn A. Moloney. – <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/2440/2>
6. Pascua I. Translation and Intercultural Education / Isabel Pascua // *Meta*. – 2003. – XLVIII, № 1–2. – P. 276–284.
7. Wierzbicka A. Intercultural Pragmatics and Communication / Anna Wierzbicka // *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. – Elsevier : Alex Barber (ed.), 2005. – P. 5–735.