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# Acquisition of Communicative Skills by Foreign Students in a Multicultural Learning Environment

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**Abstract.** The study's relevance was determined by the lack of attention towards specific aspects of foreign students' acquisition of communicative skills in a multicultural setting and the need to record the psychological and pedagogical circumstances of academic activities that facilitate successful intercultural communication skills acquisition. This study aimed to provide evidence for theoretical claims and describe the experiment that aimed to validate the psychological and pedagogical conditions under which foreign students can acquire communicative skills within a multicultural environment at Kazakh University. To investigate the cognitive, emotional, and personality-based behavioural components of communicative skills, a range of valid methods were selected. The study was conducted using a mixed method. The research comprised 22 students from China, 14 students from the Republic of Korea, 19 students from Afghanistan, 20 students from the Republic of Iran, and 9 students from Vietnam, all pursuing their education in Kazakhstan at two universities. The research results showed that high levels of empathy and ethnic tolerance were obtained by 26.4% of the experimental group and 28.2% of the control group students respectively. It was found that conflict situations were more likely to arise as a result of competition, which was confirmed by 36.8% of the experimental group and 34.8% of the control group. The results obtained have significantly broadened the parameters of foreign students' learning and work activity's communicative and personality aspects.

**Keywords:** communicative competencies; communicative control; empathy; ethnic tolerance; foreign students

## 1. Introduction

Global developments impact education across all sectors, resulting in expansive international education initiatives. Favorable conditions for academic mobility of both students and educators have stimulated substantial influx of trainees within

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the global education network. The admittance of international students has contributed to the university's international reach and educational proficiency (Gestanti et al., 2018). Representatives from non-linguistic fields exhibit subdued enthusiasm towards cultivating intercultural proficiency (Litvinova et al., 2021).

Studying abroad positively benefits students' overall cultural development, but concurrent subjective and objective challenges must also be handled. Students must acquire good communicative skills, beyond linguistic competency, to adapt to new sociocultural conditions. Such concerns extend to the acquisition of communicative skills in students studying at foreign educational institutions. Language intercultural competence studies in foreign language teaching carry more significance than psychological and pedagogical issues when it comes to acquiring communicative skills of foreign students in a multidisciplinary university. Munezane (2021) argues that students' readiness to communicate is a significant factor influencing their intercultural communication. Some studies indicate that intercultural interaction in study groups promotes the development of intercultural communication (Some-Guiebre, 2020; Tleubay et al., 2020). Carlos and Portugal (2021) identified issues with inadequate teacher training, insufficient educational resources, and ineffective methods of assessing students' intercultural communication abilities. Litvinova et al. (2021) explored the potential of online learning materials to enhance intercultural competence in their study. Tleubay et al. (2020) noted that learning foreign languages with an emphasis on cultural linguistics helps to develop intercultural communicative competence. Gutiérrez-Santiuste and Ritacco-Real (2023) define intercultural competence as an individual's capacity to communicate and act suitably in an intercultural setting, identifying the following elements of this competence: behavioural, affective and cognitive. Therefore, it can be inferred that the communicative abilities of international students are composed of emotional and personality-based, cognitive, and behavioural factors that contribute to successful communication in a diverse university setting.

The study's significance is established by investigating the characteristics of communicative skills acquisition by foreign students in the multicultural setting of a Kazakh Pedagogical University, ascertaining the psychological and pedagogical conditions necessary for successful acquisition of intercultural communication skills within the academic environment.

The research aims to provide theoretical grounding and experimental verification of the psychological and pedagogical conditions of foreign students' communicative skills' acquisition in a multicultural environment at Kazakh University.

#### Research Questions:

- 1) What are the foreign students' communicative skills components in a multicultural environment?
- 2) Are there any interrelationships between the components of international students' communication skills?
- 3) What conditions will contribute to the development of foreign students' communication skills in a Kazakh university?

## 2. Literature review

Academic discussion actively takes into account students' communication skills in a new socio-cultural environment. As part of globalised higher education, students are increasingly able to acquire knowledge from a broader range of academic subjects. Moreover, there has been a growing presence of teachers with international qualifications who adopt global perspectives. (Ilyashenko et al., 2019a; Shmeleva, 2019a). Foreign students represent a significant aspect of academic activities at universities (Shmeleva, 2019b). Intercultural communications are viewed as a framework for vocational mobility of specialists under global labour market conditions, as well as an important factor of self-development aimed at achieving trans-individual goals and integration of national education in the global education area (Gudkova et al., 2019; Onishchuk et al., 2020). Zubkov (2020) identifies crucial aspects of intercultural competency, comprising linguistic proficiency (language knowledge), sociolinguistic skills (ability to communicate), sociocultural competence (comprehension of cultural interaction), strategic planning (intentional measures for knowledge enhancement), and cognitive learning (wide-ranging personality development). Intercultural communication competencies entail managing communication skills and styles while participating in the social framing of stakeholders' intercultural identities (Yang, 2018). Meanwhile, a communicative environment is crucial for personality growth and building relationships with others (Ibatova, 2019). Developing intercultural competence involves integrating sociolinguistic innovations to establish a flexible sociolinguistic setting that incorporates elements of psychological support and adaptation (Malyuga et al., 2018; Rubtsova, 2019). Cruz (2023) highlights the significance of developing communication skills and understanding people from different backgrounds in the acquisition of intercultural competence. Such a skill cannot be acquired in a brief span of time and must be developed throughout life. Luchaninova et al. (2019) defines communicative competence as the ability to self-assess and develop one's interpersonal skills to successfully pursue a professional career. Klimova et al. (2019) suggests that the best way to develop communicative competence is in a multicultural environment.

The enhancement of students' communicative skills necessitates the provision of appropriate conditions and the evaluation of their ability to employ modern e-learning technologies (Ilyashenko et al., 2019b). In addition, Qin et al. (2022) discovered that learners pursuing linguistic and non-linguistic disciplines possess contrasting perceptions when acquiring international expertise through MOODLE. This variance may arise from distinct motives for obtaining competence and its relevance to respective career fields. Khajieva et al. (2020) suggested implementing a comprehensive model for the acquisition of foreign language communicative competencies, Shafazhinskaya et al. (2020) and Jabbarov (2020) argued that it is needed to initiate the active use of innovative education technologies aimed at strengthening self-study skills, free-thinking and creativity, facilitating communicative skills' acquisition in a multicultural learning environment. This will also contribute to the effectiveness of students' general cultural competencies acquisition, which depends on a mature theoretical basis, pedagogical conditions, new approaches and e-learning technologies (Salpykova et al., 2022).

The comprehensive investigation into the social and psychological assimilation of international students indicated a requirement for developing an efficient adaptive atmosphere (Biserova & Shagivaleeva, 2019; Zoyirova, 2018). Students' diverse and traditional cultural knowledge helps to avoid cultural discrepancies, which are usually caused by psychological and pedagogical factors (Almazova et al., 2019). To address this issue, Rerke et al. (2018) propose the use of mediation technologies, which aim to prevent radical ideologies.

Smakova and Paulsrud (2020) conducted studies on intercultural competence usage in Kazakhstan's educational space and found that teachers recognize the effectiveness of its development for enhancing language skills and vice versa. Unfortunately, such methods are not used in practice. Yelubayeva and Mustafina (2020) demonstrated that the enhancement of intercultural proficiency yields positive outcomes in terms of language acquisition and comprehension of social and cultural matters, as well as in intercultural communication.

The literature data analysis allows us to infer a persistent and ongoing concern regarding the development of communication skills among foreign students. Nonetheless, the quest for enhancing these students' intercultural competence across varied environments, while considering their specialisation and educational institution's specificities, remains relevant.

### 3. Materials and methods

The study employed a mixed methodology, consisting of modelling and questionnaires, to identify personality indicators. The research hypothesis of the study assumes that the communicative skills of foreign students are a stepwise and multifaceted system dependent on specific psychological and pedagogical conditions, such as:

- acquisition communication skills at the level of interpersonal and intercultural communication;
- students' involvement in diverse forms of collaborative activities guided by cultural dialogue;
- integrated use of interactive teaching methods and forms, designed to enhance communication skills;
- organisation of a virtual multimedia communicative environment.

To verify the hypothesis, two groups of respondents participants were arranged. The groups were comprised of students studying at different higher education institutions. Specifically, the experimental group comprised 38 foreign second-year students (22 male and 16 female, with an average age of 18.4 years) from Abai KazNPU, while the control group comprised 46 second-year students (25 male and 21 female, with an average age of 18.3 years) from Al-Farabi KazNPU, who were enrolled in various academic programs. The experimental group students actively engaged in enhancing their communication skills by utilising the authors' recommendations, while the control group students were evaluated using the conventional system.

The participants comprised of students from China (n=22), the Republic of Korea (n=14), Afghanistan (n=19), Republic of Iran (n=20), and Vietnam (n=9) who had

an intermediate level of Russian language. This was evaluated through standard tests during admission to the university.

The respondents then completed the questionnaires via a Google form sent to them by email.

To explore the cognitive, emotional, and personality components of communicative skills, a set of questionnaires was chosen. To investigate the emotional and personality components specifically, the Megrabian and Epstein (1972) empathy diagnosis was employed. This diagnosis includes 36 statements to determine the levels of emotional response (empathy): very high (scores 82-90); high (scores 63-81); normal (scores 37-62); low (scores 12-36); and very low (scores 1-11). This technique was based on: 1) the capability to detect other individuals' emotions, coupled with the capacity to envision another's worries; 2) attaining social adjustment as a result of interpersonal communication; 3) utilizing forward and backward questions to confirm or deny the assertions made. Excessive empathy levels may cause emotional reliance on others. Normal levels of empathy facilitate appropriate responses to the actions of others and emotional regulation. Individuals with low or very low levels of empathy experience difficulty in communication and tend to work in isolation (Poole et al., 2022). The validity of Lawrence et al.'s (2004) study has confirmed the reliability of this test.

The test for assessing tolerance in international relations developed by Sobkin and Adamchuk (2015) comprises 12 question sets that establish the degree of tolerance or intolerance (scoring from -90 to -45 signify a high level of intolerance development; from -45 to 0 - low level of intolerance development; from 0 to 45 - low level of tolerance development; from 45 to 90 - high level of tolerance development). The test aims to measure objective attitudes regarding tolerance and intolerance towards international relations and is targeted at different context-specific scenarios: registration of emotional attitudes towards one's own national identity; the social barriers to representatives of other nationalities; the manifestation of tolerant or intolerant attitudes in the military, education and cultural traditions; attitudes towards ethnic conflicts; emotional acceptance or non-acceptance of representatives of other nationalities. The methodology used in this study yields data on various aspects of international relations, including national self-identification and emotional attitude towards one's nationality (Jaramillo, 2021). The validity of this test has been proven by its authors Sobkin and Adamchuk (2015).

The study examined the cognitive component by employing a diagnostic approach to comprehend the significance of non-verbal behaviour. The methodology, presented by Zimina (2015) and endorsed by the National Commission, involves 48 images of non-verbal communication scenarios to measure levels of comprehension. Scoring high (33-48), medium (16-32), or low (1-15) determines the grasp of non-verbal communication meanings. Participants were presented with images depicting non-verbal behaviour and asked to identify its meaning. Results were compared to the correct responses and the total number of accurate answers was tallied (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022).

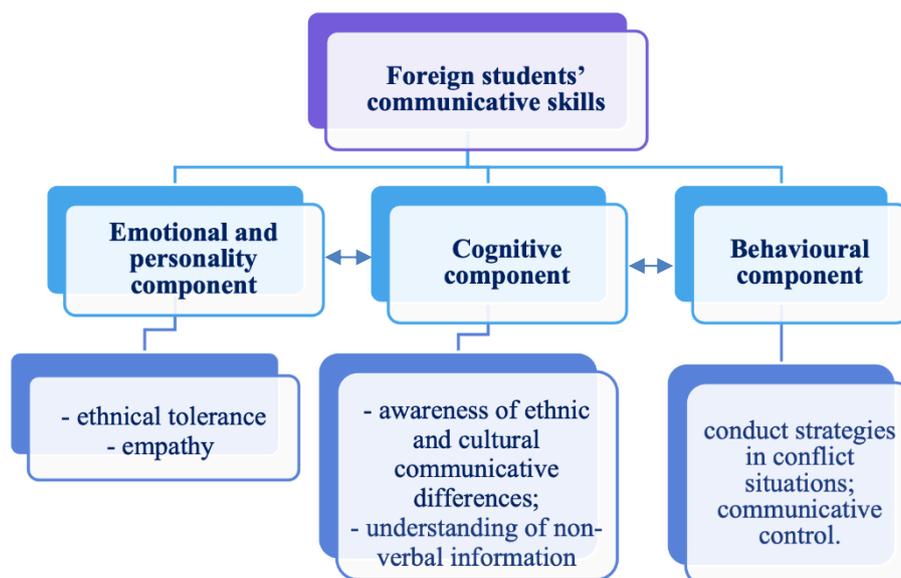
For investigating the behavioural component, the Thomas-Kilmann test was applied. This assessment comprises 30 statement pairs designed to reveal a respondent's conflict resolution style. This test suggests two scales: "assertiveness" and "cooperativeness", with the help of which five different conflict modes: competing (assertive, not collaborating), avoiding (unassertive, not collaborating), accommodating (unassertive, collaborating), collaborating (assertive, collaborating), and compromising (interim assertiveness, and readiness to collaboration), are registered (Duong & Pham, 2022). The validity of this test has been proven by its authors Thomas and Kilmann (1978).

In the final phase of the research, the authors investigated the correlation between the language skills of international students and their peers' abilities during learning and interaction. The statistical methods of Student's t-test and Spearman correlation test were utilised with the aid of Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics 28 to analyse the data and determine the link between the communicative capabilities of foreign students.

The ethical considerations outlined in the Guidelines for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (The Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology, 2016) have been adhered to in this article. The ethical issues during the research were addressed by strictly adhering to bioethics norms including obtaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of the information obtained, treating all participants fairly and equitably and upholding the principle of integrity. No specific funding was allocated for the research, and no conflict of interest was detected.

#### **4. Results**

Teachers' readiness to teach students from different countries is an important aspect of their professional competence; it is crucial to be aware of learners from different nationalities and not to emphasise their foreignness. This study involved teachers who had more than 5 years of teaching experience in intercultural student groups and had undergone appropriate training (advanced training courses) on teaching foreign students. According to the "foreign students' communicative skills" construct, the conceptual model of foreign students' communicative skills was developed (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: The conceptual model of foreign students' communicative skills in the context of the author's vision of the problem.**

Communicative abilities in this model include personal emotional, cognitive and behavioural components which affect the communication abilities of international students.

Table 1 presents comparative results of research on empathy as a reflection of emotional and personality-based components of communicative skills of students in the experimental and control groups of respondents.

**Table 1: The results of students' empathy degree diagnosis by Megrabian and Epstein (pre-experimental data)**

Empathy level	Scores	The experimental group		The control group		Student's t-test	<i>p</i>
		n	%	n	%		
Very high	82-90	2	5.3	3	6.5	1.6330	>0.05
High	63-81	8	21.1	10	21.7		
Normal	37-62	16	42.1	21	45.6		
Low	12-36	7	18.4	8	17.4		
Very low	1-11	5	13.2	4	8.7		
Total		38	100	46	100		

Source: Calculate by Author

Following the data analysis, the empirical evidence indicates that the level of Student's T-Test is 1.6330 ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting the students' display of empathy is dynamic, particularly towards exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, the control group of respondents showed a slightly superior empathy level as compared to the experimental group. At the same time, 18.4% of students in the experimental group and 17.4% of those in the control group exhibited a low level

of empathy, while 13.2% of students in the experimental group and 8.7% of those in the control group displayed a very low level of empathy. This necessitates close attention from teaching staff to support such students, particularly those studying in their home country, to prevent potential conflicts.

Table 2 presents the results of the international tolerance assessment conducted by Sobkin and Adamchuk (2015). After analysing the results (Table 2), it was found that the members of the experimental group showed significantly lower tolerance ( $p < 0.05$ ) and higher intolerance towards people of different nationalities compared to the respondents of the control group.

**Table 2: The comparative indicators of international tolerance in experimental and control group respondents**

Indicator	Level (scores)	Experimental group		Control group		Student's t-test	<i>p</i>
		n	%	n	%		
The registration of the peculiarities of emotional attitudes to one's own national identity	High level of tolerance (45-90)	13	34.2	19	41.3	1.1882	>0.05
	Low level of tolerance (0-45)	25	65.8	27	58.7		
	High level of tolerance (45-90)	22	57.9	18	39.1		
	Low level of intolerance (0-45)	16	42.1	28	60.9		
The characteristics of social distances (barriers) to other nationality representatives	High level of tolerance (45-90)	24	63.2	29	63.0	6.9282	<0.05
	Low level of tolerance (0-45)	14	36.8	17	37.0		
	High level of intolerance (45-90)	12	31.6	15	32.6		
	Low level of intolerance (0-45)	26	68.4	31	67.4		
Manifestation of tolerant /intolerant attitudes at the ideological level (army, education, cultural tradition)	High level of tolerance (45-90)	18	47.4	22	47.8	2.4495	<0.05
	Low level of tolerance (0-45)	20	52.6	24	52.2		
	High level of intolerance (45-90)	21	55.3	21	45.7		
	Low level of intolerance	17	44.7	25	54.3		

	(0-45)						
Attitude to ethnic conflicts	High level of tolerance (45-90)	10	26.3	12	26.1	4.899	<0.05
	Low level of tolerance (0-45)	28	73.7	34	73.9		
	High level of intolerance (45-90)	27	71.1	31	67.4		
	Low level of intolerance (0-45)	11	28.9	15	32.6		
Emotional acceptance/non-acceptance of other nationality representatives	High level of tolerance (45-90)	26	68.4	33	71.7	2.3094	<0.05
	Low level of tolerance (0-45)	12	31.6	13	28.3		
	High level of intolerance (45-90)	25	65.8	32	69.6		
	Low level of intolerance (0-45)	13	34.2	14	30.4		
Total		38	100	46	100		

Source: Calculated by Author

Statistically significant differences were only in the segment "The registration of the peculiarities of emotional attitudes towards one's own national identity". The rest of the clusters demonstrate a result of  $p < 0.05$ . The most noticeable were the differences occurring in the attitudes toward their own national identity and social barriers to other nationality representatives (Table 2). The hindrance of foreign students' acquisition and communication aptitudes within a diverse academic milieu is precisely associated with specific factors. Table 3 presents the findings of the probe into the behavioural facet of the learners' communicative competencies, based on the Thomas-Kilmann test (1974).

**Table 3: The styles of conflict modes of experimental and control group students**

The prevailing mode of behaviour in a conflict situation	Experimental group		Control group		Student's t-test	<i>p</i>
	n	%	n	%		
Competition	14	36.8	16	34.8	4.000	<0.05
Collaboration	8	21.1	10	21.7		
Avoidance	7	18.4	9	19.6		
Compromise	4	10.5	6	13.0		
Adaptation	5	13.2	5	10.9		
Total	38	100	46	100		

Source: Calculated by Author

In both respondent groups, the dominant behavioural style was competition (refer to Table 3). A higher percentage of students in the control group chose compromise (13.0% versus 10.5%), indicating greater adaptability. However, the opposite was true for the experimental group, where 13.2% of students chose adaptation compared to 10.9% of students in the control group.

To investigate the specificities of the connection among the emotional, personal, cognitive, and behavioural components' indicators, the existence of interrelationships between the test indicators using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient were calculated (Table 4).

**Table 4: Interrelations of foreign students' communicative skills (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient)**

	Empathy	Ethnic tolerance	Knowledge ethnic cultural communication differences	Understanding non-verbal behaviour	Communicative control
Empathy		0.699** 0.000	0.608** 0.000	0.832** 0.000	0.776** 0.000
Ethnic tolerance	0.699** 0.000		0.398* 0.029	0.649** 0.000	0.800** 0.000
Knowledge of ethnic and cultural communication differences	0.608** 0.000	0.398* 0.029		0.516* 0.003	0.533* 0.002
Understanding non-verbal behaviour	0.832** 0.000	0.649** 0.000	0.516* 0.003		0.730** 0.000
Communicative control	0.776** 0.000	0.800** 0.000	0.533** 0.002	0.730** 0.000	

Note: \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Source: Calculate by Author

The positive correlation at the high significance level ( $r=0.699$ ) was revealed between empathy and ethnic tolerance, empathy and knowledge of ethnic and cultural communication differences. Also, empathy correlates ( $r=0.832$ ) with understanding non-verbal behaviour and with communicative self-control  $r=0.776$ . Ethnic tolerance, apart from empathy ( $r=0.398$ ), correlated with the knowledge of ethnic cultural peculiarities ( $p=0.029$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ ); understanding non-verbal behaviour  $r=0.649$  ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p\leq 0.001$ ); communicative control  $r=0.800$  ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p\leq 0.001$ ). Students with higher levels of empathy exhibit greater levels of tolerance towards other ethnic groups, better understanding of ethnic cultural nuances, improved communication skills and better self-control during communication. The comprehension of ethnic and cultural communication disparities was associated with a correlation between understanding non-verbal behaviour ( $r=0.516$ ) and communicative control ( $r=0.533$ ) ( $p=0.003$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$  and  $p=0.002$ ,  $p\leq 0.05$ , respectively). The correlation between understanding non-verbal behaviour ( $r=0.730$ ) and communicative control ( $p=0.000$ ,  $p\leq 0.001$ ) was evident. Knowledge of ethnic and cultural communication differences was influenced by this understanding, ultimately resulting in greater control over communication among students. Effective communication requires an understanding of various

factors, including awareness of cultural diversity, the ability to tolerate different perspectives, and the capacity to control communication behaviors. These findings support the developed model of communication skills and emphasise the importance of strengthening all aspects of this model.

. Based on the results, recommendations for the acquisition of communicative skills by foreign students in a multicultural learning environment were proposed and implemented in the educational process of the experimental group:

1) Adaptation: acquaintance with a group, encouragement of communicative motivation.

This stage promotes motivation for group support and adaptive capacity, and awareness of the importance of communication skills.

2) Raising awareness: acquisition of communicative skills; immersion in a multicultural environment.

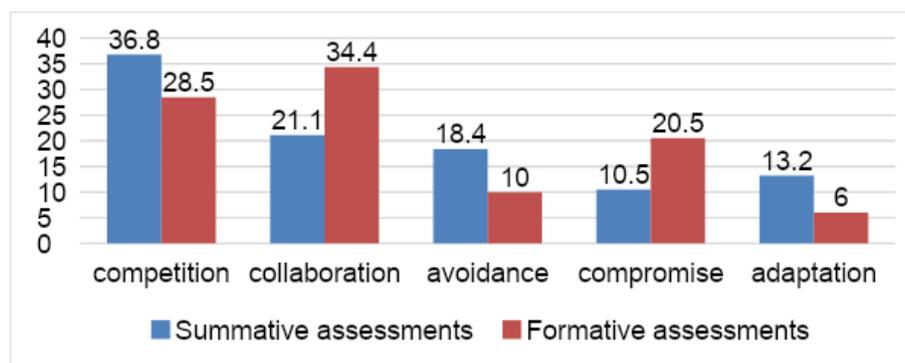
Applying this point would help foreign students to self-perception as communicative actor, self-identification as an international interaction group member.

3) Implementation: acquisition of communicative skills, and their application in various interactive formats within a group.

This stage contributes to initiative communication, motivation of collaboration, active use of communicative skills.

The application of the recommendations presented led to the following results.

Further analysis revealed that the behaviour modes of students in conflict situations in the experimental group underwent positive changes. The number of students employing a productive style increased significantly by 13.3% for collaboration and 10.0% for compromise (as depicted in Figure 2). In contrast, the control group experienced an increase of only 3.3% in the collaboration behaviour mode, and the compromise mode remained unchanged.



**Figure 2:** The distribution of foreign students by behaviour modes in conflict situations according to summative and formative assessment results of the experimental group (according to the Thomas-Kilmann test) (posttest data)

Source: Calculate by Author

The experimental group students demonstrated development in all aspects of communicative skills, supported by statistical analysis using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. A significant shift was occurred in terms of empathy:  $p=0.026, p\leq 0.05$ ; ethnic tolerance:  $p=0.045, p\leq 0.05$ ; communicative control:  $p=0.002,$

$p \leq 0.05$ ; the knowledge of ethnic and cultural communication differences:  $p = 0.000$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ . The shift in the indicators of understanding the non-verbal behaviour has occurred at a very high level  $p = 0.000$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ . Within the control group, only the indicator of communicative control demonstrated the shift:  $p = 0.004$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ . The peculiarities, regularities, and interrelationships that have been established will enhance effective acquisition of communicative skills by foreign students in a multicultural learning environment at a university.

## 5. Discussion

The research highlights the significance of enhancing the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components in the communication of international students. This study is consistent with Bingzhuan's (2021) research on the assessment of intercultural competence among university students using a questionnaire. Additionally, this study builds upon and supplements the research presented in Munezane's (2021) model of intercultural communication, which identifies eight factors of individual differences that impact intercultural communication proficiency. This study expands on the research conducted by Gutiérrez-Santiuste and Ritacco-Real (2023), which explored the behavioural, affective, and cognitive aspects of intercultural communication online. It is important to consider these unique aspects in cross-cultural communication. Our study examines how international students' communication skills incorporate emotional and personal factors, such as tolerance and empathy. The cognitive component encompasses familiarity with ethical communication distinctions, comprehension of information communicated through nonverbal methods, and the behavioural component, incorporating tactics for managing conflicts and regulating communication.

Numerous studies have focused on examining global internationalisation processes at universities, as well as the unique aspects of such processes across different countries. According to Doucette et al. (2021), modern multicultural education serves as a reflection of the cultural interactions that are an inevitable part of contemporary society. These interactions encourage students to gain valuable experience with socialising across cultures and develop their cultural awareness. Jandevi and Zareen (2020), Kusumawati et al. (2020), and Siregar et al. (2021) have identified the challenges in internationalising education in certain countries, particularly in Indonesia, where universities are predominantly located in towns with a stronger sense of tradition. The education systems of different countries have notable variations in their cultural and religious values. Warshaw et al. (2020) highlight the significance of broadening students' communicative skills in a cross-cultural educational setting. White and Saqipi (2021) distinguished the demand for financial and human resources, considering the conflict of interest of parties, provision of infrastructure, and understanding of short-term and long-term advantages of internationalisation. This study analyses the idiosyncrasies of students' behavioural patterns in situations of conflict. This analysis assists in identifying the required measures to anticipate and resolve such conflicts effectively. Shaping soft skills has been recognised as an important trend in education. Tsalikova and Pakhotina (2021) note that professionals in any field require soft skills and competencies for a successful career, therefore contemporary academic programmes must focus on developing these skills. Such

requirements extend to educational systems and advocate for the acquisition of complementary competencies alongside professional skills. In this study, a comparable approach was employed, involving a thorough cultivation of intercultural proficiency through supplementary classes within instructional hours. Bybee et al. (2021), Handayani and Wienanda (2020) highlighted the necessity of combining hard and soft skills for ensuring productive activity. Bessarab (2021) stating that the most significant soft skills are: adaptivity and openness (82.9%), cultural understanding (74.3%), language and communicative skills (71.4%), the co-working abilities (65.7%) and interpersonal communication skills (54.3%). The study reveals the possible manifestations of soft skills in an intercultural context. Effective communication requires initiating a discussion, accepting criticism, collaborating and summarising (Warshaw et al., 2020). Communication between students of different languages and between students from different countries in an academic environment contributes to the development of language and communication skills that are used in real-life situations and is also of great importance.

Seeking academic process resources for communicative skills' development is one of the aspects discussed in such studies. An efficacious means for accomplishing successful cross-cultural education involves the collaboration of students and instructors in non-conventional lessons to establish a foundation for learning before tackling the course's primary content (Bybee et al., 2021). During university classes, both students and instructors are acquainted with each other and able to amend their plans (Aksoy & Ceylan, 2021). Warshaw et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of broadening students' communicative skills in a culturally diverse educational setting. Prasetyani and Diner (2018) demonstrated a successful partnership between students proficient in sign language and services supporting Spanish-speaking families with deaf children, which enhances comprehension of multicultural and multilingual identities. The interpersonal interaction with instructors also influences the success level of teaching (Schembri, 2021). Teaching teamwork communication skills is a critical condition for the development of students' communicative skills, which is a key to the success of training specialists (Haas, 2019; Rautakoski et al., 2021). Aksoy and Ceylan's (2021) research identified possibilities for enhancing classroom interaction in the social sciences course through utilising the communicative approach. Educators should be conscious of the communicative approach whilst interacting and communicating, as this supports discourse style diversity (Haas, 2019). The study examined the communication skills of international students, identifying their components and levels. The results revealed significant positive relationships between the communication ability indicators of the respondents at high and medium levels of significance.

Communicative skills and language acquisition are a prerequisite for the successful adaptation of foreign students to the new multicultural environment, based on the case of Indonesian students in China (Jandevi & Zareen, 2020). It is necessary to apply more flexible communicative strategies for effective adaptation of foreign students, involving communication between foreign students and locals, to ensure private space for foreign students. The research by Kiessling and Fabry (2021) showed that Indonesian students adapted to the living conditions in

China quite successfully, but their main difficulties refer to speaking the Chinese language. The capacities for the development of linguistic and cultural competencies at the regional level (Malta) related to one's professional activity were highlighted Schembri (2021) as well. Communicative competence is understood as a complex entity implying the ability to perform speech activity through the language learned meeting the requirements of the communicative aims and situations in a certain sphere of activity (Rautakoski et al., 2021). This study enhances the available information on efficacious methods for cultivating intercultural proficiency, accounting for language acquisition, fostering soft skills within intercultural interaction, and elevating students' empathetic capacity. The communicative and personal dimensions of educational and vocational activities among foreign students are further explored. The structured features, patterns and associations will guarantee superior learning outcomes for international students in the diverse academic surroundings of the university.

## 6. Conclusions

In summary, the results verify the effectiveness of developing intercultural skills utilizing the conceptual model developed. In today's society, there is an increasing need for graduates to possess intercultural communication abilities and highly advanced intercultural competencies as a communication skill set. Expanding methods for acquiring intercultural communication skills in a multicultural setting is vital to modern higher education and continues to intrigue researchers. During the research, emphasis was placed on teamwork. Interactive methods including online conferences, training, guides, quizzes, and other events were utilized. The intense use of informational and communicative mediums enabled success. The term "acquisition" refers to the process that leads to the structural transformation of students' personal qualities and activity. Organised based on the principles of communicativeness, interactivity, meaningfulness, activeness, and creativity, the work described the qualitative changes and interrelationships between the components of the acquired quality step by step.

The development of foreign students' communicative skills is a complex, multi-step process that relies on specific psychological and pedagogical conditions. These include the shaping of interpersonal and intercultural communication, the engagement of students in various types of joint activities through cultural dialogues, and the application of interactive and innovative learning methods. The majority of students showed a medium level of development (43.3%-46.6%) and insufficiently mature behaviour modes in conflict situations (3.3%), which gave rise to the development of the program on communicative skills' acquisition. This necessitates the further development of programmes and utilization of approaches that enhance students' intercultural competence. Augmenting the curricula and approaches will escalate the degree of intercultural communication, cultivate empathy, intercultural sensitivity and conflict resolution abilities, thereby fostering the production of the requisite soft skills required for top-tier professionals.

Using the conceptual model of intercultural communication skills development, this study presents surveys that explore diverse aspects of foreign students' personalities to prevent conflicts. Considering these peculiarities would aid in the

effective adaptation and future professional success of foreign students. This will enhance the benchmarks of successful international collaboration among higher education institutions and augment the competitiveness of the educational establishment.

### **Recommendations**

The prospective areas of further research are the development of psychological and pedagogical conditions for students' acquisition of communicative competencies in various areas, and the development of the typology of students based on communicative style characteristics. This will enable foreign students to adapt to the learning environment and develop intercultural competence, avoiding conflict situations. The implementation of the developed conceptual model can overcome the constraints of the present study, as it enables testing on larger student samples, assessing the levels of intercultural proficiency and acceptance among students from diverse nations.

### **Limitations**

The study was limited by the use of a relatively small sample of students from two Kazakh universities during the survey, which affected the results of the study and made it a pilot study. However, as the experimental and control groups were randomly selected from a multicultural student environment, the sample remained relevant. There is a strong likelihood that under different social, cultural, and learning circumstances, comparable studies would produce somewhat distinct outcomes. As a result, we aim to pursue further research in this field. The results of the study are influenced by the specific cultural context in which students study in Kazakhstan. The countries represented in the study, including China, the Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, and Vietnam also have an impact on the results.

Considering the suggestions in the creation of curricula and programmes can broaden students' intercultural competence, regardless of their field of study. By implementing the conceptual model's recommendations in the education of students with different ethnic backgrounds, studying in various specialities, outcomes of the current research might grow, and its limitations will be diminished.

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