

Nonverbal communication competence in foreign language education of Kazakhstani learners: challenges and strategies

Abstract. *Today in foreign language classes most attention is given to verbal aspects and least importance is paid to teaching nonverbal aspects of intercultural communication. The necessity of intercultural communication competence (ICC) formation in foreign language education and lack of its main component – nonverbal communication sub-competence is the focus of this paper. The aim of this study is to answer the following research questions: What knowledge of nonverbal communication helps foreign language learners to communicate on an intercultural level? How is nonverbal communication knowledge embedded into the content of foreign language education? What learning environment in the higher institutions will enhance the students' nonverbal communication competence? The research was conducted with freshmen and sophomore students of linguistic department: "Translation studies" at the end of the academic year in order to reveal what they had learned and what were the main sources of learning nonverbal communication. Data were collected through literature review as well as document analysis of the curriculum, the main course books on teaching EL used in this specialty and questionnaires given to students.*

Keywords: *foreign language education, intercultural communication competence, nonverbal communication.*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-6895-2022-14-4-268-278>

Introduction

For a long period, the foreign language methodology required learners to achieve foreign language proficiency in order to be able to use it in different communicative situations, which meant developing learners' communicative competence. But thanks to findings of American anthropologists: [1, 2, 3, 4] and others it was shown that people may use the same language but still encounter problems of misunderstanding because of cultural differences of language. Mostly they refer to nonverbal communication. If we consider the definition of intercultural communication given by scholars, we find the following meanings: the specific sphere of human relations [1, p. 137), an adequate understanding

of two participants of communication who belong to different national cultures [5, p.26], as a process of verbal and nonverbal communication of people who are conscious that each of them is different but each of them accept the "alien" or "otherness" of the partner" [6]. In general, they all suggest understanding of intercultural communication as an adequate perception, understanding, and interaction of participants from different cultures.

On the basis of the findings in the field of intercultural communication the goal of foreign language education (FLE) was reconsidered and since the 1990-s years it has been formulated as formation of the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) by learners. The concept of the intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

and the ways of developing this competence was mostly presented and discussed by M. Byram [7, 8] in the United Kingdom; by S.G. Ter-Minasova [9] in Russia and by S.S. Kunanbayeva [10, 11] in Kazakhstan.

Byram [7] identifies ICC as the knowledge of the participants of another culture, and it is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language. Being able to use a foreign language appropriately in different cultural contexts means not only intercultural knowledge, but also skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction on the basis of attitudes and values and critical cultural awareness. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) presents an integrative quality based on social, cultural, psychological, linguistic knowledge and skills, personal characteristics [7, p. 53].

The formation of intercultural communicative competence is defined by the current intercultural paradigm of foreign language education and contemporary methodology as criteria of developed person's ability to participate in foreign language communication as a dialogue of cultures on an intercultural level. But only language learning within the frame of A1-C2

levels according to standards of CEFR [12] and adapted to Kazakhstani foreign language education system is not enough, because if we want our language learners to master intercultural communicative competence there is a need to study along with foreign language the specifics of nonverbal communication used in the culture of the people who use this language. In addition, students need to be able to reveal differences and similarities with communication in their native language and culture.

But, unfortunately, the specifics of nonverbal communication of the target language are still a neglected issue in foreign language teaching, although the importance of teaching to the nonverbal communication in FLE/ELE was mentioned in the works of L.Q. Allen [13], Youngming Shi & Si Fan [14], C. Surkump [15] and others. Ignoring this in teaching foreign languages means that we deliberately prepare our foreign language learners for misunderstanding, confusion in the real process of communication with foreigners. Teachers of foreign language are not ready to teach nonverbal communication and are not oriented to motivate the interest in learning specifics of nonverbal communication of foreign culture and consequently don't develop the reflective skills of nonverbal communication at an intercultural level.

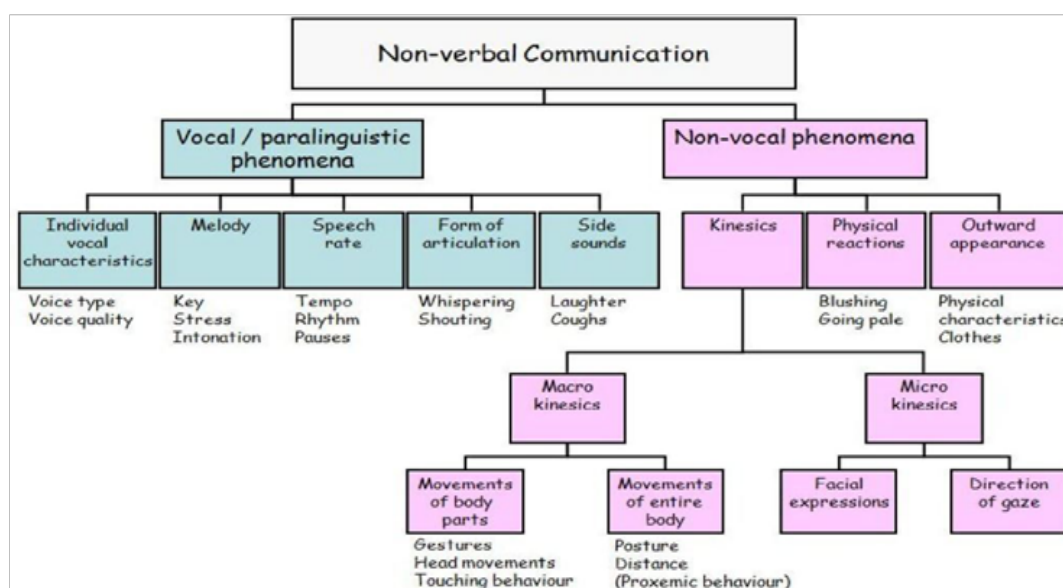


Figure 1. System of non-verbal communication by Carola Surkump (2014, 14)

The main systems of nonverbal communication

The general definition of nonverbal communication is the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people. But this definition doesn't cover the whole content of nonverbal communication, because it doesn't take into account the paralinguistic aspect of nonverbal communication. Here we agree with a psychologist Scherer who suggests classifying nonverbal communication into vocal and non-vocal phenomena and under vocal phenomena the paralinguistic aspects of speech are considered: individual characteristics of the voice, speech melody, temporal aspects, forms of articulation and side noise. Non-vocal phenomena in conversation include the external characteristics of a speaker, physical reactions and a number of kinesics phenomena, which can be divided into macro-kinesics and micro-kinesics phenomena [16, p.225]. The following Figure 1 shows an overview of non-verbal communication from the point of vocal and non-vocal phenomena presented by Carola Surkump [15].

As well as the types of nonverbal communication indicated in this figure: kinesics, proxemics, haptics, physical appearance and dress, and paralanguage we need to add the other types such as chronemics, gastica and olfactics, which are necessary to know while establishing contacts with a person from another culture. Along with knowledge of types of nonverbal communication it's necessary to be aware of its main functions when embedded in a verbal communication. According to Knapp and Hall [17] nonverbal communication plays six primary functions: repeating a message sent by the verbal code; contradicting the verbal message; substitution for a verbal message; complementing a verbal message; accenting the verbal message; and regulating the verbal communication. Most of these functions are used by speakers on an unconscious level, automatically in verbal communication in native language, but how the speakers control or adapt their nonverbal communication with a person coming from another culture is an issue.

Nonverbal behavior should be considered not only from the point of forms, types, functions but also as a communicative strategy. Knowledge of nonverbal communication can help learners both to understand the foreign language and to express themselves properly while in contact with a foreigner.

Speech partners from different cultural backgrounds have to learn each other's expectations regarding appropriate nonverbal behavior. Lustig and Koester [18] identified three cultural variations in nonverbal communication. First, cultures differ in their specific repertoire of behaviors. Body movements, gestures, postures, vocal qualities, and spatial requirements are specific to a particular culture. For example, the concept of personal space in communication, so called "bubble", is very important for Americans, who dislike standing close to others, whereas Kazakh will experience the opposite feeling as coldness and indifference of people if they stand at a distance.

The second cultural variation is that all cultures display rules which govern when and in what context certain nonverbal expressions are required, permitted, preferred, or prohibited. Display rules govern such things as how far apart people should stand during conversation, where and whom to touch, when and with whom to use direct eye contact, how loudly one should speak, and how much one should show his or her feelings. This can be illustrated well by considering and comparing the ways of greeting in the culture of Kazakh and Western people. The most widespread forms of greeting are shaking hands, hugging, kissing, bowing and nodding heads. Western people mostly use as a formal way of greeting only shaking hands, while in Kazakh culture all these ways of greetings may be used formally. In Kazakh culture the way of greeting mostly depends on the traditions and principles, established in Kazakh ethics: respect toward age of elders, social status, gender and age hierarchy, family tiers, hospitality and tolerance, that may have a meaning for interlocutors and define their speech behavior and the way of greeting while meeting. Much of this implicit knowledge is hidden from foreigners in Kazakhstan.

The third cultural variation is that meaning attributed to particular nonverbal behaviors differs from culture to culture. For example, interpretation of such facial expressions, such as a smile at passers-by or strangers, which is common for American or other Western people, may seem very odd and not acceptable for Asians, including Kazakh people, who do not initiate a conversation with strangers. Kazakh people as Russians usually smile only to relatives, friends and close people, but not to strangers. The reasons for this may be hidden in the past historical and political issues of both countries.

So, these examples from American and Kazakh nonverbal communication as “space”, “greeting” and “smile” demonstrate their difference in use and potential misunderstanding between representatives of these cultures is almost inevitable. They also confirm our idea that foreign language learners should be aware of the specifics of nonverbal behaviour peculiar to foreign culture and reflect on their own need to avoid any intercultural conflicts.

Thus, culture, nonverbal communication and verbal communication are deeply interwoven into each other. We agree with Shuang Liu, Zala Volcic and Cindy Gallois [19] that cultural rules and norms determine what nonverbal behavior corresponds to a concrete verbal communication situation. Unlike verbal codes, the nonverbal codes are not always formally fixed in the content of language course books. Language learners acquire the norms of appropriate and inappropriate nonverbal behavior peculiar to foreign culture through the process of second socialization during instruction or being in another culture while travelling which is not common practice for Kazakhstani students. It's very important to stress that strategies of nonverbal communication in native culture are acquired unconsciously while awareness of culture's rules and norms of foreigners' nonverbal behaviors are achieved through conscious learning on the basis of comparison with the native one.

If the language learners are motivated to know and keep in their mind the main types and functions of nonverbal communication and be able to reveal and interpret adequately

the differences in using these elements in real conversation, and consequently react them we may say they are on the way of achieving intercultural communicative competence.

Methodology

The research was conducted with 25 students from 1-st and 2-nd years of study at the department “Translation studies” in Suleyman Demirel University at the end of academic year 2020-2021 in order to reveal what they learned about nonverbal communication and what were the sources of learning. Data were collected through analysis of the curriculum, syllabuses and the main course books on teaching EL used in this specialty, as well as a questionnaire given to students, which consisted of 15 questions in English language. The questionnaire was carefully designed using open-ended and closed multiple choice questions to get more information from the participants. The first 5 questions were aimed to reveal the learners' general knowledge of nonverbal communication and sources of its receiving. The other 5 questions were directed to define the degree of knowledge and experience of nonverbal communication peculiar to English speaking countries, main sources and activities where they could get it. The last 5 questions were oriented to reveal learners' self-evaluation of nonverbal communication competence, types of problems they had in nonverbal communication with foreigners and personal attitudes toward developing this quality in future. So, the types of questions were constructed in order to define the cognitive, behavioral and affective aspects of students' nonverbal communication competence and the problems of its developing within foreign language education in Kazakhstan universities. The received data was processed with quantitative and qualitative methods.

Results

One of our research questions was dedicated to defining how the knowledge and skills of nonverbal communication was embedded into the content of foreign language education at

university curriculum. We believed that objective answers we may get first from analysis of questionnaires given to students.

Thus, for the questions: “Did you ever study the nonverbal communication peculiar to native and foreign culture? And if yes, where did you receive the information from?” The answers showed that the students were not taught to this field within the frame of a special discipline, dedicated to nonverbal communication. They learned some information about the nonverbal communication peculiar to native culture, and it was mostly from their native social environment. They didn’t have any systematic preparation in this field. It bore mostly chaotic characters. It was supported by the response to the question: “How do you evaluate your competence in the nonverbal communication peculiar to the target language?” The students evaluated their competence of nonverbal communication as low level that was also proved later by testing directed to the nonverbal communication knowledge and abilities to relate and interpret some nonverbal elements referring to kinesics, proxemics, haptics, and paralanguage use in both cultures.

For the question “Did you study the nonverbal communication peculiar to the target language (English)?” The students answered: “No” or “Little” and as a source for learning the nonverbal communication they mostly marked: “Watching British and American films” and only some of them indicated “University discipline”. This means that watching films has a great potential for increasing students’ competence in

nonverbal communication, and this approach should be used while constructing foreign language methodology at higher educational institutions. The least opportunity our students have to communicate with a foreigner, native speaker and learn the model of nonverbal behaviour in an authentic environment at the university because of a very few foreign instructors. Unfortunately, nobody of students indicated foreign language instructors as a source of nonverbal communication competence developing, and this is a serious challenge to consider in future. The Figure 2 below shows an overview of main sources, applied in foreign language education.

After films as a second source the students indicated “studying a university discipline”. We suggested all practical disciplines at 1-st and 2-nd years of study which could contain some information of nonverbal communication in foreign culture: “Major foreign language in the context of intercultural communication – B1, B2”, “Contextual grammar”, “Listening and pronunciation”, “Speaking”. The responses mostly distributed three disciplines in fairly equal portions: “Major foreign language in the context of intercultural communication – B1, B2”, “Speaking”, and “Listening and pronunciation”. The Figure 3 below shows an overview of main university disciplines and their relevance to nonverbal communication from the students’ perspectives.

Taking into account that “studying university discipline” was less marked as a source of learning



Figure 2. Sources of non-verbal communication knowledge

Practical disciplines



Figure 3. Practical disciplines with non-verbal communication knowledge

of nonverbal communication we analyzed the curriculum, syllabuses, and course books on teaching EL used at the linguistic department. The analysis of development of Kazakhstani curricula of professional education “6B02302- Translation studies” showed a change of paradigm in teaching students to foreign language, because new subjects were introduced into the curriculum since 2012 year: “Major foreign language in the context of intercultural communication – B1, B2” as an obligatory discipline (2012), “English for specific professional purposes in the context of intercultural communication – C1” (2015) and other elective courses. The titles of these disciplines require the intercultural loaded foreign/second language textbooks, cognitive-lingua-cultural methodology of teaching foreign language and a sufficient level of experience in intercultural communication as the determinative factors in developing students’ knowledge and skills of nonverbal communication peculiar to English language speakers. To respond to the question: how well the foreign/second language textbooks are interculturally loaded we have analyzed the main course book: “New English File” by Cristina Lathman-Koenig, Clive Oxenden, Paul Seligson, third edition (2014), Upper-Intermediate [20].

Kazakhstani students use the foreign/second language textbooks of Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan and other foreign publishers to provide authenticity, so important in foreign language acquisition. An initial analysis of the contents of these books showed that they don’t contain concrete topics devoted to nonverbal

communication peculiar to English language speakers. Thorough investigation of the contents of “New English File” by Cristina Lathman-Koenig, Clive Oxenden, Paul Seligson, third edition (2014), Upper-Intermediate, however, showed that at least half of the units (5 out of 10) have a real potential to introduce and teach students to nonverbal communication peculiar to foreign language and opportunities to conduct a contrastive analysis with students’ native culture. Our findings are shown below in Table 1. All units have potential to develop students’ knowledge of paralinguistic features of non-verbal communication peculiar to English language: English language intonation, melody, speech, stress, tempo, rhyme, pauses. As for vocabulary and speaking only unit # 7 “Actors acting” contains the information of nonverbal communication in reading and listening sections: “What everybody is saying”. The other units may touch on this indirectly, for example, “strategies on the interview”, “speaking in public”, “clothes and fashion”, “music and emotion”, “truth and lies”, “working out meaning from context of conversation”. All these topics can be considered in comparison with native culture of learners that helps them reveal the difference and similarity of strategies in nonverbal communication.

In Table 1 we added some possible strategies and examples of how the potentials of the topics in Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Speaking sections of the units could be activated and mobilized in teaching nonverbal communication. Thus, results of questionnaire conducted with 25 students and

Table 1. Potentials of teaching to nonverbal communication in “New English File” (2014), Upper-Intermediate.

Unit№	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Speaking
1A, B	Working out meaning from context of conversation, decoding non-verbal behavior, which may anticipate, repeat, contradict, substitute, complement or accentuate the verbal message	Intonation and sentence rhyme - paralinguistic features of non-verbal communication.	Talking about... interview – non-verbal communicative strategies on the interview: time of arrival, eye contact, outward appearance (clothes). All these are different in Western and Kazakh cultures, that’s why they should be interpreted and discussed properly with students.
2B	Clothes and fashion - outward appearance	Melody, speech, stress, tempo, rhyme of speech of people at different age stages.	Older and wiser? – Different non-verbal communicative strategies depending on the age and status of the partner. For example, the way of greeting in Western and Kazakh cultures.
6A	Music and emotions -face expressions	Sentence rhyme and intonation - functions as complementing or accentuating the verbal message	Ways of expressing feelings – using verbal and nonverbal communication strategies. For example, smiling, eye contact, kissing in Western and Kazakh cultures.
7B	Actors acting	The body language: body movement, position, touching and space.	Describe the people’s body language & feelings. For example, interpreting peoples’ body language at different life events in Western and Kazakh cultures.
9A	Truth and lies – Contradicting & deceiving function of nonverbal communication.	Changing stress on nouns and verbs depending on situation	
	Nonverbal communication may contradict verbal actions of a partner. For example, proper interpreting of smile or laughter in Western and Asian cultures: Japan, Kazakh.		

our analysis of the contents of the main language textbook showed us that our foreign language instructors are not aware of the importance of teaching nonverbal communication to learners and as a consequence they don’t explicitly lead learners’ attention to these aspects of real communication with foreigners and further their ability to compare foreign culture with students’ native culture in order to develop their intercultural competence. Foreign language instructors must be able not only to interpret

specifics of foreign nonverbal communication, but be skillful to present and organize their and students’ proper nonverbal behavior in the classroom, and create an authentic environment for language learners in this way.

The proper use of this potential for developing students’ knowledge of nonverbal communication requires from foreign language teachers a corresponding training proficiency in English language and methodology of foreign language education.

Discussion

In this section we wanted to define what learning environment in the higher educational institutions will enhance the students' nonverbal communication competence.

The formation of nonverbal communicative competence within the English language education is a challenge for Kazakhstani learners, because Western culture is quite different from the Kazakh one. For this reason, Kazakhstani learners may encounter some misunderstanding of nonverbal behavior from the part of English (American) people. In order to decrease the cases of misunderstanding and failures while communicating with culturally different others it's necessary, to our mind, to follow the strategies suggested by Shuang Liu, Zala Volcic and Cindy Gallois [19]. First, focus on similarities rather than differences, whereas in practice we usually start with differences. Perceived similarities reduce uncertainty and anxiety of the language learners and hence facilitate their interest in intercultural communication. Second, work to overcome stereotyping and prejudice, that will help our learners to go from ethnocentric perspectives to ethno relative ones [21], which encourages us to understand the nonverbal behaviour of others from their cultural perspectives and react adequately. Third, maintain an openness of mind and cultural awareness of both native and foreign nonverbal behaviors to help us reflect that what we practice in our culture may not be the only correct way or the best way of doing things, and we must be flexible in adapting our communication as the situation requires.

Having defined the strategies of developing nonverbal communicative competence, we need to consider opportunities of proper classroom and extracurricular activities that involve our students in an authentic language learning environment aimed at developing intercultural communicative competence and its main component – nonverbal communicative competence. Edward Hall [2], the founder of intercultural communication studies, who insisted that a learner had to do intercultural communication, not just talk about it. That's why we suggest the following activities:

1. Watching and discussing foreign movies and films;
2. Case-studies with elements of nonverbal communication;
3. Role-plays, using elements of nonverbal communication;
4. Video-conferences, real-life meetings with speakers of the target language;
5. Drama activities involving learners in nonverbal communication.

While introducing all these activities EL teachers should use more nonverbal behaviors themselves in language classrooms to improve learners' study motivation in authentic language learning. The foreign language teacher being an "intercultural mediator" can help students see connections between the students' native and other cultures, as well as awaken their curiosity about difference and otherness, and develop tolerance and empathy toward foreign culture. So, in order to develop learners' competence in nonverbal communication we need to motivate them, explain why it is necessary, provide them with interesting information and cases, then organize adequate activities and involve them, and lastly, on the basis of reflection create opportunities for getting experience in this field. As results of the questionnaire showed, in practice students had evaluated their competence of nonverbal communication as low level and they expressed their desire and interest to learn specifics of nonverbal communication while foreign languages are used.

Conclusion

Since the end of the 20th century the formation of intercultural communicative competence has been claimed by foreign language methodologists as a goal of foreign language education, but in practice its formation has been realized only partially, because the focus is still concentrated mostly on verbal communication in English language lessons. Nonverbal communication is often overlooked in foreign language teaching programs although the course books contain some materials addressing nonverbal behavior of Western people. Unfortunately, the foreign

language instructors are not always aware of the necessity to create a corresponding learning environment through using proper potential of course books' materials, organizing adequate action-oriented activities, exercises, showing samples of nonverbal behavior in the classroom in order to motivate the students' interest toward nonverbal communication peculiar to foreign culture. Foreign language instructors need a serious training course within professional development. This study proposes to oblige the foreign language instructors to include teaching about nonverbal communication into the contents of the FLE syllabus, because the formation of intercultural communicative competence is impossible without it. This study was done mostly from student's perspective and less from teachers' perspective, that's why it may be a limitation of this paper. It would be necessary to investigate foreign language instructors' awareness of the role and specifics of nonverbal communication within the formation of ICC.

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Қазақстандық студенттердің шет тілін оқытудағы бейвербалды коммуникативтік құзыреттілік: міндеттер мен стратегиялар

Аңдатпа. Бүгінгі таңда ағылшын тілі сабақтарында мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынастың вербалды аспектілеріне көп көңіл бөлінеді, ал вербалды емес аспектілеріне аз көңіл бөлінеді. Шетел тілін оқытуда мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілікті (МКК) қалыптастыру қажеттілігі және оның негізгі құрамдас бөлігі – вербалды емес компоненттің болмауы келесі зерттеу сұрақтарына жауап беретін осы мақаланың мақсаты болып табылады: Вербалды емес қарым-қатынас туралы қандай білім оқушыларға мәдениетаралық деңгейде қарым-қатынас жасауға көмектесуі керек? Бейвербалды қарым-қатынас туралы білім шет тілін оқытуға қалай кіреді? Жоғары оқу орындарында қандай оқу ортасы вербалды емес коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті қалыптастыруға ықпал етеді? Оқу жылының соңында Аударма ісі мамандық бірінші және екінші курс студенттерімен олардың не үйренгенін және вербалды емес қарым-қатынастың қай көздері болғанын анықтау мақсатында зерттеу жүргізілді. Ақпаратты жинау үшін әдебиеттерге шолу, құжаттарды талдау (оқу жоспарлары, бағдарламалар және осы мамандық бойынша қолданылатын ағылшын тілі оқулығы), сондай-ақ студенттерге сауалнама жүргізілді.

Түйін сөздер: шет тілін оқыту, мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілігі, бейвербалды қарым-қатынас.

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Невербальная коммуникативная компетентность в иноязычном образовании казахстанских обучающихся: вызовы и стратегии

Аннотация. Сегодня на занятиях английского языка наибольшее внимание уделяется вербальным аспектам и наименьшее внимание - невербальным аспектам межкультурной коммуникации. В этой связи целью данной статьи является поиск ответов на следующие вопросы исследования: Какие знания о невербальной коммуникации должны помочь обучающимся общаться на межкультурном уровне? Каким образом знания о невербальной коммуникации включены в иноязычное образование? Какая среда обучения в высших учебных заведениях будет способствовать формированию невербальной коммуникативной компетенции? Исследование было проведено со студентами первого и второго курса отделения переводческого дела в конце учебного года с целью выявить, чему они научились и, что явилось источниками формирования их невербальной коммуникативной компетенции. Источниками сбора информации явились обзор литературы, анализ документов (учебные планы, программы и учебник английского языка, используемый на данной специальности), а также анкетирование студентов.

Ключевые слова: иноязычное образование, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, невербальная коммуникация.

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