



## International Communication in Distance Learning

Anna R. Bekeeva<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The development of the Internet opened new prospects for improving the global education system. It is reflected in the technical equipment of educational institutions, their access to global information resources and new types, methods and forms of education. It is focused on active cognitive activity of students and cooperative learning. In distance education the learner and teacher are separated spatially from each other, but they can be in constant interaction with the help of interactive technologies of educational process, forms of control, methods of communication through e-mail and other Internet technologies, and specifically the ongoing organizational and administrative measures. Distance learning is based on the use of the Internet technologies, runs a number of new features and involves the implementation of certain principles, among which great importance is the principle of distributed cooperation, integration, joining the world network for the education community.*

*The article studies the problem of distance education in cross-cultural and multicultural environment. It is emphasized that state-of-art information and communication technologies allow schools to expand their students' number by entering the international educational market. The demand for new professions and specialization of traditional ones significantly broadens the target audience for teaching. However the teaching and learning in international educational space is connected with important problems. In the students' body, which was relatively homogeneous and within national borders, cultural diversity becomes more obvious.*

*Many obstacles in cross-cultural communication may occur due to the differences between cultures, in which teachers and students were born and live. Such problems are sometimes caused by differences in teachers' and students' social status in their respective societies, acceptability of certain curricula positions, differences in cognitive skills between teachers and students and students themselves. It is underlined that learning efficiency substantially increases provided that the instructional material is adapted to the deeply internalized cultural values and thoughts.*

*Keywords: Information computer technology, international communication, distance education, foreign language teaching, modern teaching, distance learning process, innovative technology*

### 1. Introduction

Educational institutions have a unique opportunity to expand its activities through international arena. Globalizing trade, industry and finance spheres create a world in which cross-cultural interactions occur more often than at any other time in the past. The need for new professions and specialization in many traditional occupations significantly increase the scale of the target audience for training. Professionals and students wishing to master the specialized knowledge and skills that meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, look for access to relevant educational resources, even if it has to go abroad or to study remotely. More simple and cheap communication, especially, is being fuelled by a growing desire to teach and learn in a cross-cultural environment.

Online distance education courses that are designed based on principles derived from social constructivist theories of learning usually incorporate teaching strategies that require learners to collaborate, communicate, explore, and reflect. In these perspectives learning is viewed as an active, constructive process through which the learner creates a new knowledge based on available cognitive resources by extracting information from the environment and integrating it with the information stored

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<sup>1</sup> RUDN University (Russia)



in memory; thus, it follows that constructivist and collaborative approaches are the most appropriate modes for managing online discussion groups.

## 1.2 Distance learning

Regardless applying constructivist principles in online distance education course design, it is important to consider whether these design principles fit the perspectives and expectations of students from different cultural background. Learners' expectations of a course, whether face-to-face or online, tend to be focused on the mastery of content for the course and on obtaining high scores on the tests.

Active participation in course activities is a very important part of online learning.

Researchers have studied how to motivate online learners to participate actively, for example, by providing incentives and by making participation a part of evaluation. An online learning environment has many benefits for learners, such as flexibility, the quantity and quality of participation, open and accessible communication, and archived postings from participants for reference. However, as students enrol in online courses from different locations, time zone differences may keep some students from participating, especially when synchronous communication methods are used.

Advances in media technologies make open and distance education an important alternative to traditional learning format, creating favourable conditions for the formation of communities involved in an effective virtual learning. Now distance learning is the most promising from the point of view of experts who are engaged in strategic issues in education, part of the educational system of the XXI century.

However, teaching and learning in the international educational space are associated with important problems. The students from relatively homogeneous national boundaries become more involved in a visible cultural diversity, perhaps due to deep cultural values and ways of thinking that cannot be excluded from the learning process [2].

The growing influence of cultural differences is not only their recognition and tolerance, but also a desire to preserve this diversity as a valuable resource in helping to solve many of the problems facing the world community now and it will remain in the future.

In addition, you should take into account the desire to maintain diversity in response to the threat of losing their cultural identity in the face of globalization and to strengthen community cohesion through the recognition of the right to cultural expression.

The increasing demand for access to educational resources makes students legitimately require culturally adapted educational content that ensures the full development of the individual. As it has been noted, the students acquire knowledge in a multicultural context which is not synchronized with their own culture, sometimes there is a serious conflict. This conflict is associated not only with an incompatible way of learning and teaching, but also because of the growing wish to maintain contact with the local culture in which the student will ultimately work. Consequently, educationalists, teachers, methodologists – especially those who work in the online environment must possess the skills to prepare content that is tailored to the cultural specifics [3].

If the organization of the educational process and development of didactic materials are essentially social in nature, suppliers of learning content should not take a neutral position when creating their courses. Learning efficiency will be significantly improved, if the developers of educational material, providers of educational material are aware of the importance of considering the cultural stock of their students and how these cultures can occur in the learning preferences.

They have a clear understanding of how their cultural views are represented in materials. Moreover, providers of educational content must analyse your expectations regarding how students will and should react, to be ready for unexpected reactions. In addition, they must balance the need to help students to adapt to specific professional, educational and dominant cultures.

## 1.3 International communication in distant learning

The progress in the development and conduct of international courses raised concern about the socio-cultural parameters of the job, the cultural adaptability of training materials, adjustment and



transformation courses. Existing studies show that cultural differences can have a negative effect on the desire of students to participate in online learning. It is noticed that students of international courses experience a sense of marginalization and sometimes even alienation from local students even in schools with a high degree of interactive communication. There is no doubt that through communication implemented different models of intercultural communication and that the sharper cultural differences between actors, the more the communication process is disturbed. Distance education is more prone to cultural conflicts than traditional, because teachers interact with students who remain physically and socially within a culture that is alien and almost unknown to the teacher.

With the expansion of the international market for online learning providers of training courses should take into account the different educational values and cultural expectations of the participants and to consider the impact of these differences on the learning process to retain competitive advantage. This requires the development of new theories and implementation of empirical research to determine new trends in creating and delivering cross-cultural online courses [2].

Respect for a foreign culture is a very important condition of work of teachers and supervisors as they perform the function of social agents having substantial influence on their students. In other words, considering culture as a priority in the process of learning does not mean simply the desire to be effective in promoting the acquisition of knowledge, here a relevant ethical side of the issue becomes.

Essentially, when we teach, we teach culture as well. Knowledge, skills and assessment – these are all manifestations of culture. Moreover, when we teach, we transmit not only what we know but how we know it, and as a justification of the usefulness and value of knowledge. The acts of teaching and learning are integrated into the culture and are important tools. In a multicultural environment, this transfer must be done very carefully, without any cultural bias.

Theoretical framework studies of cross-cultural communication are determined by the works of G. Hofstede, in which he proposed a model of cultural differences in different countries. In the original version for the analysis of cultural values proposed four dimensions: individualism – collectivism, avoidance of uncertainty, distance from power (strength of social hierarchy) and masculinity – femininity (task orientation versus person-orientation). Later G. Hofstede added the fifth dimension long-term – orientation. His works remain an important resource in many scientific fields related to cross-cultural communication [1].

Based on this model, it can be argued that many of the difficulties in cross-cultural communication sometimes arise because of differences between the cultures in which they were born and live. Sometimes these problems occur due to differences in the social status of teachers and students in the two societies, the relevance of the curriculum in each of the societies, the differences in cognitive abilities between teachers and students and between students themselves.

Despite the external differences between people, we still believe that inside we are all the same. This false assumption prevents us to take into account the culture of other countries, inducing them to minimize cultural differences. This leads to the fact that people in different countries misunderstand or misinterpret each other.

## 2. Conclusion

Sources of influence on thinking and behaviour can be represented in several levels, including human nature, culture and personality [1]. When people show differences or similarities, it is easy to confuse these levels. The resulting uncertainty gives rise to false assumptions and complicates the interaction with others. This is true not only for teaching but also for other life situations.

Thus, the use of ICT properly integrated into the learning process, is one of the most promising means of development of intercultural competence in teaching foreign languages to students with various line orientation. The successful integration of ICTs into the classroom warrants careful planning and depends largely on how well policy makers understand and appreciate the dynamics of such integration. Apart from its minor weaknesses, it is generally believed that there will be many benefits for both the learner and the teacher, including the promotion of shared working space and resources, better access to information, the promotion of collaborative learning and radical new ways of teaching



and learning. ICT will also require a modification of the role of the teacher, who in addition to classroom teaching, will have other skills and responsibilities which will pave the way for quality education. With the advent of open source software, the use of ICT has become more extensive and accessible to society. Ultimately, the use of ICT will enhance the learning experiences for children, helping them to think and communicate creatively and thus be part of the global learning community.

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