

The concept of “intercultural competence” in educational and scientific discourses

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Abstract. This article attempts to analyse the definition and structure of the concept of “intercultural competence” in scientific research and normative documents at the Ukrainian and European levels, to identify commonalities and differences, to characterise positive changes and, based on the analysis, to formulate a definition of the concept that would reflect today’s realities and take into account modern challenges in education (general, foreign language). Starting from the end of the 20th century, scientific works of English-speaking, German-speaking, and domestic scientists were studied, but the main focus was on research from the last 20 years due to significant changes in the structure of societies due to globalisation, migration processes, and the activation of contacts in the professional and private spheres of representatives of different linguistic and cultural communities. Attention is drawn to the fact that understanding the concept of “intercultural competence” acquired new meanings at different stages of its research. Among the reasons for reconsideration and clarification are primarily the challenges that appeared under the influence of social processes in the pan-European and world dimensions, taking into account the national characteristics of countries’ development. In accordance with the shift in emphasis in the definition of the concept, its structure also changed; however, despite the selection of specific components by different authors, the structure of intercultural competence retained a common core and layered new components. In the educational discourse, there is a noticeable increase in attention to the concept in the context of social competence, the development of which is aimed, among other things, at conflict-free coexistence, successful communication, and the ability to adapt to a multilingual and multicultural society.

Keywords: intercultural competence · cultural awareness · multicultural education · foreign language teaching · globalization · cross-cultural communication · intercultural dialogue · European education policy · communicative competence · social competence

1 Introduction

The issue of developed intercultural competence has become relevant due to the multiculturalism of societies around the world and the need for understanding in ethnically, linguistically and culturally heterogeneous communities. There are several reasons for the increased attention to the problem of developing intercultural competence, which primarily include *migration processes*, which intensified against the background of the war in Syria (migrant crisis of 2015) and later the Russian-Ukrainian war. As a result, the share of migrants in European countries has significantly increased today, including from Ukraine, which has become a problem for European countries and, according to Kamenchuk [34], “a challenge to the unity of the European Union” as a political entity. The second reason is the *globalisation of the economy*, on the one hand, and the *internationalisation of education* on the other, which resulted in close contacts between enterprises, the creation of transnational companies, international cooperation of educational institutions and scientific institutions, joint project activities, student exchanges, grant support for scientists, which encourages direct interaction in the international, intercultural dimension, and this, for the effectiveness of cooperation, requires those who communicate to have an appropriate level of language and culture proficiency, and therefore a certain level of intercultural competence. Another reason is the *informatisation* of all spheres of life, which not only opens access to information in different languages but also allows direct communication through social networks with representatives of different language and cultural communities, which, on the one hand, requires a certain level of development of speech competence, one of the components of which is intercultural, for the effectiveness of such communication, and on the other hand, contributes to its development.

Despite the fact that the concept of “intercultural competence” is not new in both foreign and domestic scientific research, the content that is invested in it differs not only in interpretation in different national contexts and at different stages of its research but also in the use of this concept in normative documents of the education sphere, and therefore in modern conditions requires specification. The purpose of the article is to summarise the definitions of the concept of “intercultural competence” available in domestic and foreign scientific discourse and pan-European and Ukrainian normative documents, interpret its essence and structure, identify similarities and differences in the views of scientists as well as in the use of terms and concepts in normative documents. Based on the analysis was carried out to specify the concept of “intercultural competence” and determine its structure.

2 Literature review

In the scientific discourse, the concept of “intercultural competence” became the subject of analysis in the 1950s, first within the framework of intercultural communication research and then as a special direction. Among those foreign

researchers who began to study the concept of “intercultural communication” and “intercultural competence” and on whose works modern research is built, it is worth mentioning first of all Bennett [12], who is known for a number of works on the problems of intercultural communication and intercultural competence, among which: “Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings” [12], which examines the fundamental concepts of intercultural communication, its basic principles and practices, and “Handbook of Intercultural Training” [36] and “Becoming Interculturally Competent” [14], which directly deal with the development of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence as a concept was studied by Dinges [29] (chapter “Intercultural Competence” in the book “Handbook of Intercultural Training: Issues in Theory and Design”) and Arasaratnam-Smith [5] (chapter “Intercultural competence: An overview” in the publication “Intercultural Competence in Higher Education”). These two works give an idea of changes in the understanding of the concept at different stages of study, and in the chapter of the monograph by Arasaratnam-Smith [5], in addition, the process model of intercultural competence, an integrated model of intercultural communication, a model of dimensions of intercultural competence, Byram’s model of intercultural competence, a model of development of intercultural sensitivity and an anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) model are presented in detail.

It is also worth mentioning the chapter by Deardorff [28] “Framework: Intercultural Competence Model” in the book “Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models”, which offers a scientifically based structure of intercultural competence that takes into account the positions of leading scientists who have studied the concept. An extremely valuable publication is also “The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence” edited by Deardorff [27], one of the chapters of which is devoted to the issue of conceptualisation of intercultural competence, description of its models, etc.

Essential for understanding the essence of the concept of “intercultural competence” are the works of Thomas [52], who considers it in the aspect of activity (“interkulturelle Handlungskompetenz”), as such that should be an integral characteristic of a modern specialist in the conditions of globalisation. It is from this position that the concept of “intercultural competence” is considered by the scientist in a number of works, among which: “Interkulturelle Handlungskompetenz – Schlüsselkompetenz für die moderne Arbeitswelt” [52], “Praxisbuch Interkulturelle Handlungskompetenz: Für Fach- und Führungskräfte mit globalen Herausforderungen” [53]. The contribution to the study of the concept in the theoretical and practical plane by Bolten [17] (“Interkulturelle Kompetenz”), Byram [20] (“Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence”), Lüsebrink [37] (“Interkulturelle Kommunikation. Interaktion – Fremdwahrnehmung – Kulturtransfer”), Reimann [43] (“Inter- und transkulturelle kommunikative Kompetenz”) and others is significant.

Researchers who analysed the concept of “intercultural competence” touched on various aspects of it, such as *cultural awareness*: understanding one’s own cultural beliefs, values and prejudices, as well as other cultures and their features;

communication: analysis of how language, non-verbal signals and communication styles differ in different cultures and how misunderstandings can arise, on what basis, whether they can be prevented and how; *adaptability*: assessment of how people can adapt their behaviour and expectations when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, thereby preventing misunderstandings; *empathy* (empathy and respect for “otherness”): study of the role of empathy and respect in developing positive intercultural relationships and preventing conflicts.

For us, publications by scientists from the last 20 years and current (valid) normative documents of the education sphere in the domestic and pan-European dimensions are important first of all. After all, they will allow us to determine the essence and structure of this concept at the current stage of its development and analyse which of its components are considered at the European and domestic levels, are mandatory for mastering in the system of foreign language education.

In the Ukrainian scientific space, both the issues of defining the essence of the concept of “intercultural competence”, its structure, the development of intercultural competence of different target groups, and the development of the concept, in theory, are relevant. For example, Halchun [31] traced the history of the study of the concept in her article “Formation of intercultural competence as an independent scientific direction”, where the primary attention is paid to the analysis of foreign publications in their chronology, as well as the path that the concept has taken in the context of intercultural communication in Western countries, its transformation.

Rembach [44] analysed the concept itself and its structure in the context of professional training of specialists, highlighting specific features for each field. Husak and Halchun [33] characterise “intercultural competence” as an integrative formation, emphasising that this concept should be understood as “a set of knowledge about national-cultural features and realities of the country [...] and a number of intercultural skills that contribute to adaptation in the professional multicultural space” [33, p. 21-22].

The works of Vasylenko [54] (analyses the essence of the concept, its structure, principles and methods), Maksymovych [38] (view on the problem of development of intercultural competence from the point of view of a sociologist; she proposed an author’s modification of the “Scale of Assessment of Intercultural Competence” (originally by D. Mader and R. Camerer)), Pasichnyk [42] (considers intercultural competence in the structure of foreign language communicative competence) and others are also worth attention.

Despite the presence of a significant number of publications, their analysis showed a lack of unity in formulations. However, we can talk about the presence of a certain conceptual core that covers the key components and characteristics of intercultural competence. As for the interpretation of the concept of “intercultural competence” in normative documents, few such attempts have been made; besides, mainly in research, the definition of the concept in a particular document is simply recorded, but it is not compared with definitions in other documents or the wording of scientists. Therefore, we believe that such an anal-

ysis is appropriate and will allow us to approach the formulation of a definition of the concept of “intercultural competence” that is relevant today.

3 “Intercultural competence” in scientific works of foreign and Ukrainian researchers

In modern research, the concept of “intercultural competence” often appears alongside “transcultural”. This is evidence of the intensity of intercultural interaction in the globalised world, the interpenetration of cultures, and their overlap. The change in the general context of coexistence prompts changes in the interpretation of existing concepts and their particular modification.

An analysis of the English-language scientific discourse gives grounds to distinguish several works in which the concept of “intercultural competence”, its essence, and structure are analysed.

First of all, it is worth mentioning Bennett [13], who, in his studies, thoroughly dealt with issues of intercultural communication and intercultural competence. In the work “Intercultural Communication: A Current Perspective”, the researcher notes that in intercultural communication, interlocutors always deal with differences, so “it is no wonder that the topic of difference—understanding it, appreciating it, respecting it— is central to all practical treatments of intercultural communication” [13, p. 2]. Distinguishing between *objective culture* (art, literature, drama, music, but also social, economic, political and linguistic systems) and *subjective culture* (psychological traits of a certain group, their everyday thinking and behaviour, “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviours and values of groups of interacting peoples”), the scientist emphasises that understanding *objective culture* provides knowledge, but *subjective culture* forms intercultural competence [13, p. 3]. Traditionally, international and intercultural education focuses on the objective mode of this process, in contrast to intercultural communication, where the primary attention is focused on the subjective, primarily on the practical use of language in cross-cultural conditions, on how language is modified under the influence of non-verbal behaviour, how patterns of thinking in a certain culture are reflected in the features of communicative style and how reality is evaluated through the prism of culture, its ideas and values [13, p. 4]. In addition, Bennett [13] also draws attention to the fact that diversity at the level of *subjective culture* is manifested at the level of gender, regional features, social status, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, religion, professional affiliation, ethical norms [13, p. 5]. That is, intercultural competence should include those components that, at the level of knowledge and skills, will allow interaction with representatives of other cultural communities, which should include knowledge of the language, basic information about features of thinking and behaviour, values, about society as a whole, as well as the ability to consciously and impartially perceive another culture, different from one’s own.

Another work – “Becoming Interculturally Competent” – Bennett [14] associates “intercultural competence” with intercultural sensitivity and emphasises

that “successful intercultural communication [...] involves being able to see a culturally different person as equally complex to one’s self (person-centred) and being able to take a culturally different perspective. Thus, greater intercultural sensitivity creates the potential for increased intercultural competence” [14].

It is also worth mentioning the work of Bikson et al. [16], “New Challenges for International Leadership Lessons from Organizations with Global Missions”, where the authors, considering new competencies that will be in demand in the modern globalised world, emphasise there is general agreement on the qualities that are crucial for international leadership in today’s world — they involve integrating depth of substance, managerial skills, and cross-cultural competence along with broad strategic vision of the organisation’s mission [16, p. 42]. That is, cross-cultural competence (in their understanding – the ability to work effectively in different cultures and with people of different backgrounds [16, p. 25], which to some extent in content corresponds to intercultural competence, becomes a sign of a leader.

A comprehensive reference publication is “The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence” [27], where the concept of “intercultural competence” is considered both in theoretical and practical terms. The authors highlighted the issues of conceptualisation of the concept of “intercultural competence” in scientific research, made an attempt to trace the process of transformation of ideas about the essence of intercultural competence and their reflection on definitions at different stages of research, summarised information on current models of intercultural competence (compositional models, co-orientational models, developmental models, adaptational models) and characterised each of them; analysed the process of development of intercultural competence, which is considered as one of the important indicators of civic education.

Let’s cite several theses about the essence and structure of the concept, which are included in the handbook: Spitzberg and Changnon [47, p. 7]: “intercultural competence is the *appropriate and effective management of interaction* between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world”; Bikson et al. [16]: “Intercultural competence is a *multifaceted state of being*—which includes knowing that there are cultural differences, what they are, and how to apply that knowledge”. Simply put, it is the ability to adapt to different cultural settings, the essence of being bicultural [27, p. 143]; Bennett [11, p. 122]: there is a clearly an “emerging consensus around what constitutes intercultural competence, which is most often viewed as a *set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics* that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts”; Ashwill and Oanh [6, p. 143]: “Intercultural competence is generally viewed as a *skill set* that enables someone to function effectively in a cross-cultural setting”.

Hofstede et al. [32, p. 419-420] identified three phases leading to intercultural competence. These phases are: *awareness* – recognition that people have different “mental software”, are different in many criteria and characteristics → *knowledge* about culture: “about symbols, heroes, rituals and values”, which allows to get

a certain idea of the differences between one's own and the target culture → *skills*, which are based on awareness and knowledge, as well as practice. "The development of intercultural competence is accompanied by the universal values of the global citizen, who is both committed and prepared to helping build a more peaceful, just, and equitable world" [6, p. 143]. Thus, it is obvious that the authors see a *close connection between the education of a conscious citizen and the presence of developed intercultural competence*, taking into account the existing intra- and intercultural differences of representatives of different social groups in modern society.

In the works of German scientists, the concept has been considered for more than three decades. For example, Knapp and Knapp-Potthoff [35] offer the following understanding of "intercultural competence": "Here we are primarily talking about a *complex of analytical-strategic abilities* that expand the interpretative and activity spectra of an individual in interpersonal interaction with representatives of other cultures. These analytical-strategic abilities integrate general knowledge about other cultures, changes in attitudes and sensitivity to cultural 'otherness'" [35, p. 83].

Bergmann [15, p. 200] noted that it is about *the ability to feel free and successfully understand* in foreign cultures, that is, to be able to build a kind of bridge between one's own and foreign ways of thinking, feelings, value scale, means of expression, patterns of behaviour, habits, and Lüsebrink [37, p. 9] notes that intercultural competence can be defined as "the *ability to interact* with foreign cultures and their representatives in an adequate way, in accordance with their value system and communicative style of communication, and to find understanding".

The publication "Taschenlexikon Interkulturalität" Barmeyer [10] gives definitions of many concepts from the realm of interculturality and intercultural education, among them the concept of "intercultural competence": "*the ability of a person to understand* the values, ways of thinking, rules of communication and patterns of behaviour of another culture, in order to transparently discuss one's positions in situations of intercultural interaction and in this way sensitively to the foreign culture *act constructively and effectively*" [10, p. 86]. According to the author, it is worth distinguishing between general cultural competence (which improves communication with representatives of any culture) and culturally specific intercultural competence (aimed at a specific target culture).

Barmeyer [10] also touches on the issue of determining the *structure of intercultural competence*, which, in his opinion, consists of emotive attitude or cultural sensitivity, knowledge and behaviour. The scientist previously described the structure and features of intercultural competence, as well as connections and dependencies between its components in his well-known model, presented in figure 1.

Barmeyer [9, p. 66] contains a structural model of intercultural communication, where each of the components is characterised in accordance with the purpose and main features. The *emotive component* (or affective) – attitudes, values, sensitivity – aims to form a positive attitude towards other cultures and their

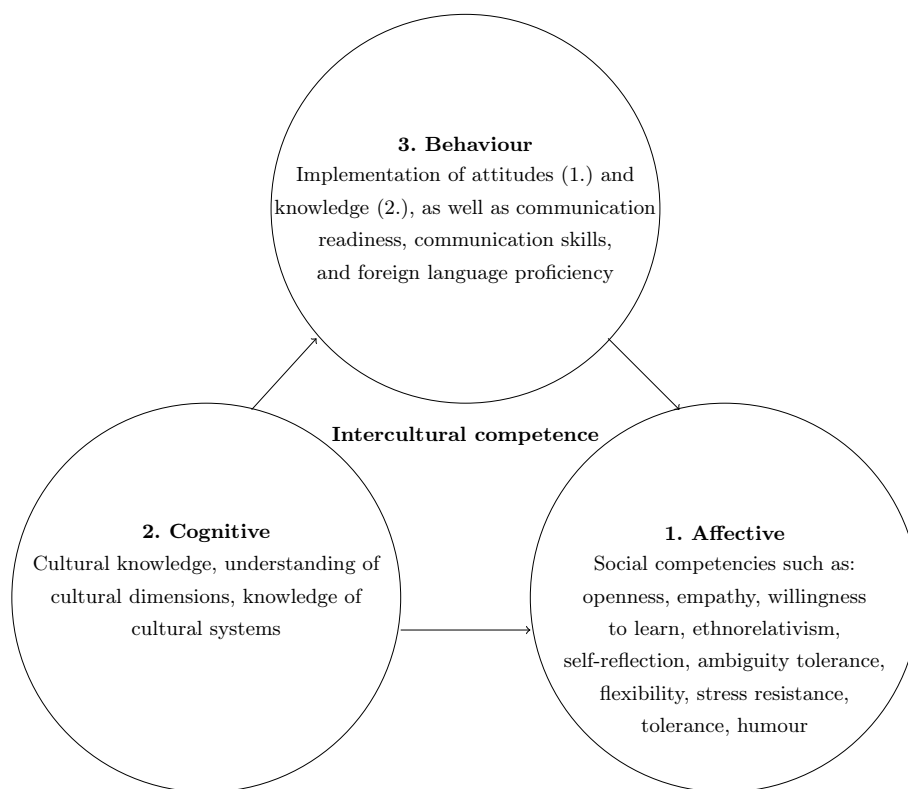


Fig. 1. Phases and structure of intercultural competence according to Barmeyer [9, p. 66].

representatives and remove fears and stress when contacting another culture. The properties inherent to this component are empathy, openness, flexibility, respect, ethnorelativism, and tolerance of ‘otherness’. The *cognitive component* – concepts, knowledge, understanding – aims to provide general cultural and specific knowledge about the culture of the target language countries (knowledge of political, social and economic systems, knowledge of types of cultures and cultural standards, knowledge of foreign languages). The *behavioural component* – abilities, skills, behaviour, specific actions – aims to motivate, encourage, and arouse interest in purposefully and effectively organising contact with representatives of other cultures. The properties of this component are the ability to apply cognitive knowledge in practice, the ability to communicate and meta-communicate, the ability to use knowledge of foreign languages in the process of communication, flexible behaviour, self-discipline [10, p. 88].

In addition, the author emphasises that *intercultural competence has the properties of social competence*, which means that it is essential in monocultural societies, not only in the intercultural context [10, p. 87]. In general, the

updated structural model of 2012 includes the same components as the 2000 model (figure 1), but it is expanded due to some features that have become relevant in new social conditions. In addition, the new model includes knowledge of foreign languages in the cognitive block (in the previous model, knowledge of foreign languages is included in the behavioural component), and the behavioural one mentions the ability to apply the acquired knowledge of foreign languages in the process of communication. Such a structure generally corresponds to the ideas of most scientists about the essence and structure of intercultural competence, although there are some differences in the names of components and their structural elements.

Erll and Gymnich [30] presented a similar but somewhat different structure of intercultural competence (figure 2). It also consists of three components: affective, cognitive, and pragmatic-communicative competence, which intersect and form common zones.

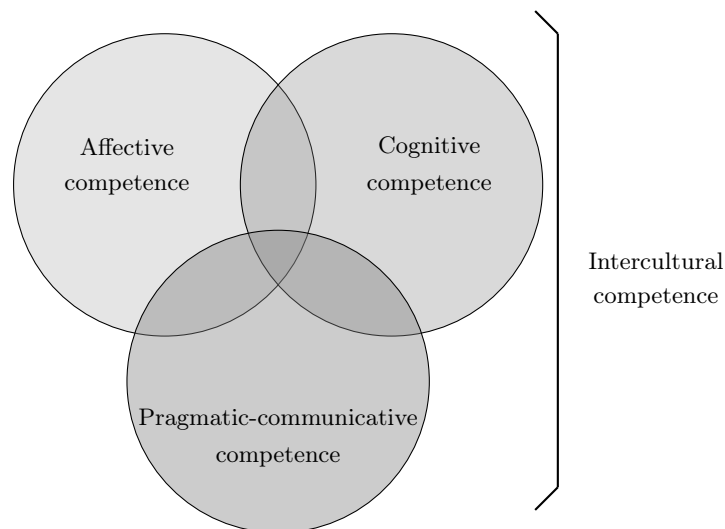


Fig. 2. Structure of intercultural competence by Erll and Gymnich [30].

The *affective* component (partial competence) consists of interest in other cultures and openness to their perception, empathy and the ability to perceive/understand 'otherness' and tolerant attitude to ambiguity; the *cognitive* – from knowledge about other cultures (specific cultural and country studies knowledge), cultural knowledge (knowledge about types of cultures, cultural differences, their features); the *pragmatic-communicative* component consists of the ability to use appropriate communicative patterns and effective/efficient conflict resolution strategies [43, p. 9]. In the work of Reimann [43] "Inter- und transkulturelle kommunikative Kompetenz", a more progressive model by Rössler [45] is also mentioned, which includes such components as: "affective (attitude,

disposition) (affektiv und attitudinal); knowledge-based and analytical (wissensbezogen und analytisch); action-oriented (handlungsorientiert) components” [43, p. 9]. Thus, to understand cultures, not only a positive attitude, tolerant attitude, and knowledge (language, culture, history) are needed, but also the ability to comprehend, analyse, compare, and find commonalities and differences, as well as the ability to interact, communicate, use appropriate strategies and tactics adequately.

Borisko [18] proposed her model of intercultural communication in the context of training foreign language teachers, which also consists of three structural components: *cognitive*, *socio-procedural* and *perceptual-psychological* (figure 3).

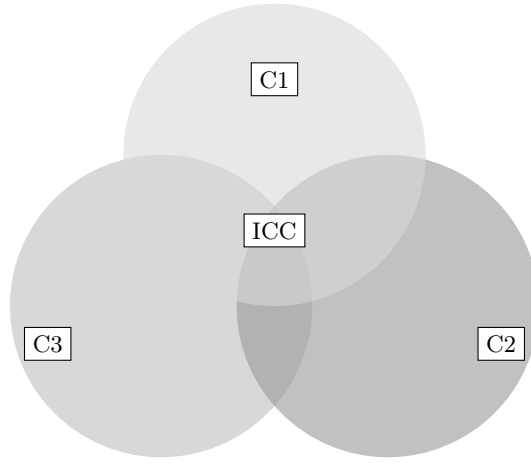


Fig. 3. Model of intercultural competence according to Borisko [18, p. 13]. C1 – the cognitive component of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) ensures the informational and communicative aspect of intercultural communication (the exchange of information between partners); C2 – the socio-procedural component of intercultural communicative competence ensures the interactive aspect of intercultural communication (interaction between partners according to the rules and norms of intercultural communication); C3 – the perceptual-psychological component of intercultural communicative competence ensures the perceptual aspect of intercultural communication (mutual perception and relationships between partners).

If we compare the schemes of the structure of intercultural competence by Barmeyer [10] (figure 1), Erll and Gymnich [30] (figure 2) and Borisko [18] (figure 3), the correspondence of components is apparent: *cognitive* coincides in name, but includes not only knowledge of language, knowledge about the country and its culture (symbols, heroes, rituals, values), but also information shared by communicants, general information about the subject of communication (Borisko [18]), as well as the ability to analyse (Erll and Gymnich [30]); *socio-procedural* (Borisko [18]) correlates in content with behavioural (Barmeyer

[10]) and pragmatic-communicative (Erll and Gymnich [30]), but there are some differences: interaction according to the rules of ICC does not necessarily take into account the attitude to communication, this should be attributed to the third component, and knowledge of language, which Barmeyer [10] refers to behaviour, should be considered as an element of the cognitive component; in addition, Barmeyer [10] refers social competence, unlike Borisko [18], to the affective component; *perceptual-psychological* (Borisko [18]) corresponds to affective (Barmeyer [10], Erll and Gymnich [30]), although it differs in name, but includes personal qualities of interlocutors that can contribute to or hinder understanding, and social competence.

Bolten [17] in the work “Interkulturelle Kompetenz” argues that, in fact, the fact that intercultural competence is considered an independent activity competence (Handlungskompetenz) is a myth because the result of intercultural communication depends on many partial competencies that in no way belong to the sphere of interculturality. “It would be correct to consider intercultural competence *not as a separate, independent competence*, but as (in the sense of Latin *competere* – ‘to combine’) – as the ability to transfer to the intercultural activity context individual, social, professional and strategic partial competencies in their best combination [...]. Thus, we can define intercultural competence as *effective activity in the intercultural context* provided by the interaction of individual, social, professional, strategic partial competencies [...]. Intercultural competence is a *synergetic procedural concept* that cannot be reduced only to the level of ‘soft skills’ but extends to the entire spectrum of activity. A person is interculturally competent when they are *able to effectively use the synergetic interaction of individual, social, professional and strategic actions*” [17, p. 87–88].

The structure of intercultural competence according to Bolten [17] covers four areas: *intercultural professional* (professional knowledge in the field of performed tasks, professional experience, knowledge of professional infrastructure), *intercultural social* (ability to work in a team, empathy, tolerance, ability for (meta)communication and mediation, ability to adapt (flexibility), *intercultural strategic* (organisational skills, knowledge management, ability to resolve conflicts and make decisions) and *intercultural personal* (willingness to learn, tolerant attitude to otherness, positive attitude, role distance) competencies. These four areas, as well as their components, are closely related and interact. However, for successful communication, knowledge of the language, intercultural knowledge, the ability to describe and explain intercultural processes from one’s own and/or others’ experience and polycentrism are necessary [17, pp. 86–87].

Thus, Bolten [17], considering the structure of intercultural competence in the professional plane, distinguishes the *professional component* (intercultural professional competence) and *social, strategic and personal intercultural competence*, which are **common to other contexts**. However, among the components defined by the author of the model, there is no knowledge of the target culture (symbols, heroes, rituals, values) and knowledge about the country (country studies), without which intercultural competence is hardly possible. Social and strategic competencies contain components that, in the editions of other scien-

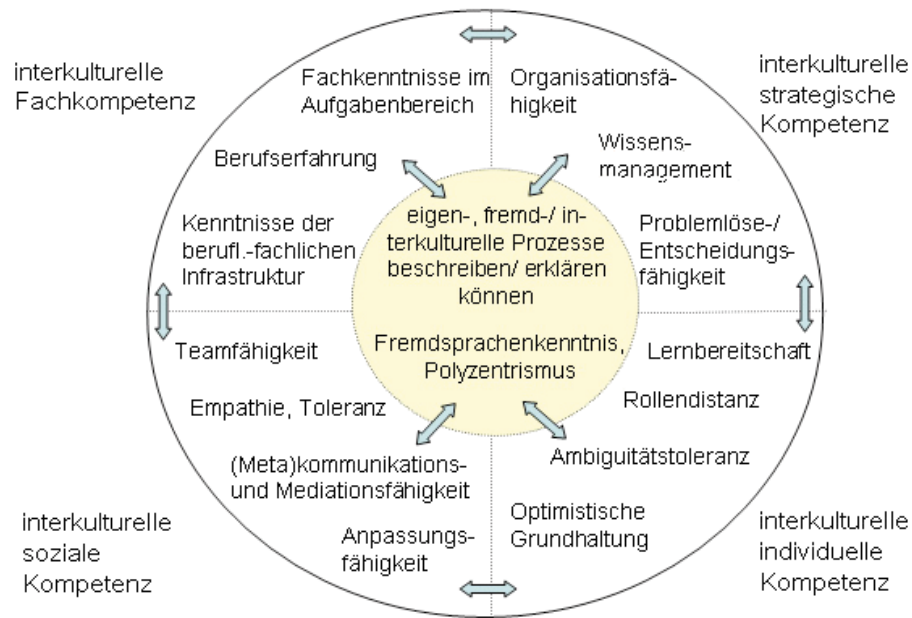


Fig. 4. Structure of intercultural competence by Bolten [17, p. 86].

tists, belong to affective and behavioural components. However, the personal component describes attitudes, but the psychological characteristics of a person, which are extremely important for intercultural communication, remain out of attention.

A similar interpretation of the concept of “intercultural competence” to Bolten [17] is found on an electronic resource that offers seminars on the development of intercultural competence ICUD Seminare: “Intercultural competence is used to denote a *complex theoretical construct*. It is a whole *complex of different abilities and skills* that are components of different areas: strategic, professional, individual and social. This is something that needs to be learned throughout life” [4]. This opinion was expressed by Straub et al. [49].

The reference publication on the didactics of foreign language teaching “Fachlexikon Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache” defines “intercultural competence” as “the *ability to interact* with representatives of another culture as sensitively, respectfully and conflict-free as possible, [it] requires a *cognitively and emotionally open personality* that is ready to *reflect* on their standards and prejudices, their self and thinking through the image of others, with *tolerance* for ambiguity [8, p. 140].

Thomas [51, p. 141] defines intercultural competence as the ability to ensure the process of intercultural interaction in such a way as to prevent misunderstandings and, at the same time, create conditions for the successful resolution of common problems in a manner acceptable to all communicants”. In addition,

the researcher quite rightly notes that “intercultural competence is manifested in the *ability to recognise, respect, value and productively use* – in one’s own and other cultural conditions and determinants – perception, judgments, feelings and actions to create conditions for mutual adaptation, tolerance for incompatibility (differences) and development of synergistic forms of cooperation, coexistence and effective models of orientation for interpretation and shaping the world” [51, p. 143].

According to Błażek [21, p. 47], in many studies, “intercultural competence is often used as a general term for an endless list of specific requirements that must be met, or skills and abilities that need to be acquired or developed”, and this is “overly idealised”. A long list of skills and abilities does not give an idea of readiness for intercultural interaction. Moreover, this list is changing because new challenges appear, which are the result of changes in the social structure and the need for communication in new, sometimes uncertain conditions. If previously intercultural competence was considered mainly in the context of communication between representatives of different ethnic communities living in different countries, now in the conditions of multiculturalism it is already about understanding within one territory. That is why intercultural competence is considered an element of civic education.

Ukrainian scientists interpret the concept similarly, most of them starting from the understanding of the concept proposed in the CEFR [23, 24]. As with other scientists, each of the definitions has specific nuances, but the general opinion can be illustrated by definition authored by Pasichnyk [42]: “intercultural competence is the *ability to understand* factors caused by another culture, and how they affect the mentality and behaviour patterns of representatives of this culture and, based on this, *build one’s own communicative and behavioural strategy* in the process of communicating with them. It is important that this interaction is based on the principles of tolerance, mutual respect and mutual understanding and does not violate the values and norms of any of the cultures”.

Otroschenko [41, p. 240] formulated her understanding of the concept concisely, based on the definitions of the concept of “intercultural competence” in foreign scientific discourse: “intercultural competence, which includes *knowledge, attitudes, abilities and skills*, is usually defined as the *ability to communicate successfully with other cultures*”.

The terminological dictionary of the publication “Language and Cross-Cultural Communication” by Manakin [39, p. 276] contains the concept of “intercultural communication”, which is understood as “a science that studies the features of verbal and non-verbal communication of people belonging to different national and linguistic-cultural communities” (it is worth noting that intercultural communication is also the process of interaction between these people) and “intercultural communicative competence” – “a type of communicative competence, which consists in the *ability to use communicative rules, postulates, maxims and conventions of communication* inherent in the linguistic-cultural community in whose language intercultural communication is carried out” [39, p. 276], as well as several related concepts, including: “intercultural adaptation” (achieving com-

patibility with the national-cultural environment of the new place of residence) and “intercultural tolerance” (tolerance, attitude with understanding and tact to the existing differences that exist in other cultures). Compared to the definitions of other scientists, the interpretation of the concept of “intercultural communicative competence” differs in the narrowing of content, because it is only about skills. However, these skills must be provided by specific knowledge and formed skills, as well as the presence of interlocutors’ attitudes to communication. Nevertheless, “intercultural tolerance”, which is an integral part of “intercultural competence”, in Manakin’s interpretation, is a concept that reveals the emotive component of intercultural competence.

The reflections of Vasylenko [54] are worthy of attention, who considered international approaches to defining the concept of “intercultural competence” and its components. It is noted that in scientific publications, there are several terms to denote this concept: “cross-cultural”, “intercultural”, “polycultural”, and “multicultural” competencies, but “intercultural” is used the most. If we analyse the definitions of different researchers cited by Vasylenko [54, p. 62], we can conclude that “intercultural (communicative) competence” is understood primarily as the *ability*:

- to adapt, changing one’s point of view for effective understanding and contact with a foreign culture (Taylor [50, p. 158]);
- to establish contacts in an intercultural context and create favourable conditions for free expression of thoughts by interlocutors, effective exchange of thoughts (Schönhuth [46, p. 96]);
- to recognise, respect, value, and productively use in one’s own and other cultural conditions and circumstances perception, evaluation, feelings and actions for correct understanding, tolerant attitude to differences and development of synergetic forms of cooperation and living together (Thomas [51, p. 141]).

Summarising the presented opinions of scientists, we can say that by intercultural competence, foreign colleagues understand primarily the ability to *understand* (through understanding to the perception of differences); *act* (contact, create conditions, develop forms of cooperation, change point of view); *be positively disposed of* (tolerate, recognise, respect, value). That is, in fact, from the very beginning, intercultural competence as an integrative formation consisted of three components: knowledge that provides understanding, recognition and perception; skills for interaction in various manifestations (activity); and attitude/disposition (tolerance of differences, positive attitude, willingness to talk).

According to these definitions, for the development of intercultural competence, first of all, appropriate psychologically determined personal characteristics are important. It is assumed that a person has a certain amount of knowledge in the field of culture, literature, everyday life and relevant language knowledge and communication skills, but this is not included in the definition; attention is paid to actions, reactions, activities, and behaviour of the speaker. It follows that taking into account these three components (knowledge and language

skills), attitudes and behaviour in the context of learning a foreign language is a prerequisite for the successful development of intercultural and, more broadly, communicative competence. In our opinion, attitude should be at the centre of attention in the process of developing “intercultural competence”, as a positive attitude towards other cultures arouses interest and motivates people to study foreign languages and cultures. Conversely, a negative perception of a “foreigner” leads to misunderstandings and often provokes aggressiveness, which often leads to conflicts and acts as a destructive factor in learning a foreign language and foreign culture.

By summarising the definitions of the concept of “intercultural competence” and the structure proposed by Ukrainian and foreign scientists, we can draw some conclusions. There is no unity in the interpretation of the concept in scientific discourse. Definitions of the concept, as well as its structure, have certain differences, but these differences in interpretation emphasise the complexity of the concept itself, its integrative nature and awareness that achieving the appropriate level of intercultural competence is possible only with the synergy of its many components.

Through the analysis of various approaches to intercultural competence, several key elements emerge as central to the concept. These include:

1. The ability to understand and respect cultural differences.
2. The capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations.
3. The possession of certain attitudes, such as openness, curiosity, and empathy.
4. The ability to reflect on one’s own cultural identity and biases.
5. The skill to adapt one’s behaviour to different cultural contexts.

While the specific terms and emphases may vary, these core components are consistently present in the definitions of intercultural competence across different fields and contexts.

It is also worth adding that ideal conditions for the formation and development of intercultural competence are created in foreign language classes, regardless of which aspect is taught. This thesis is fully confirmed by the quote of the German scientist Storch [48, p. 285]: “Learning a foreign language is always associated with certain content and certain knowledge about something: foreign words are carriers of meanings (language knowledge), texts contain information about the target country (intercultural knowledge), optical media demonstrate pictures of foreign reality (intercultural knowledge and patterns of behaviour), even sentences in exercises on the formation of forms convey certain content (language knowledge, intercultural knowledge)”. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyse how the concept of “intercultural competence” is interpreted in normative documents governing foreign language education.

4 “Intercultural competence” in normative documents

The situation with the definition of the concept of “intercultural competence” and its use in normative documents at both national and pan-European levels

over the past two decades is similar to the situation in the scientific space: there is no unity regarding both content and structure.

Let's consider several domestic documents that regulate foreign language education at the level of general and higher education.

In the State standard of Ukraine for basic secondary education, the concept of "intercultural competence" is absent, and the component "intercultural" and its derivatives are found in the composition of the concepts "intercultural communication", "intercultural dialogue", "intercultural communication", "intercultural diversity", "intercultural interaction". However, in Appendices 1 (Language and literature educational field) and 17 (Civic and historical educational field) to the State Standard in the composition of the *key competence* "Ability to communicate in the native language (if different from the state language) and foreign languages" as attitudes are mentioned "readiness for intercultural dialogue" and "understanding the importance of mastering foreign languages for intercultural communication". In the section *Civic and social competence*, the skills "to use communication skills and multilingualism for intercultural dialogue", the attitude "openness to cultural diversity through language learning and intercultural communication". In the section *Cultural competence*, there is the attitude "openness to intercultural communication, awareness of individual and social stereotypes that may be contained in the text (including artistic text, media text)" (Appendix 1) and in the composition of the *key competence* "Ability to communicate in the native language (if different from the state language) and foreign languages" as an attitude "appreciation of cultural diversity, interest in different languages and intercultural communication", and in the *Cultural competence* section there is the attitude "openness to intercultural dialogue" [22].

Obviously, the State standard [22] considers everything related to "intercultural" as an attitude. Therefore, based on this, we can assume that the goal of teaching foreign languages is the ability for intercultural communication and intercultural interaction, which is the result of form, including civic, social, as well as cultural competence of both Language and Literature and Civic and Historical, educational fields, and this should be provided primarily by inter- and sociocultural knowledge acquired in the interdisciplinary dimension of educational programs.

Similarly, there are no mentions of intercultural competence in the "Framework Program for German for Professional Communication" [7] and the program for training Germanists edited by Borisko [19]. Instead, there is sociocultural competence, which is considered as *the ability and readiness to apply a set of sociolinguistic* (linguistic aspect of knowledge about another country), *sociopsychological* (attitude!), *country studies* (knowledge about the country, its landscape, history, political system, structure of society) and *intercultural* (differences between cultures) knowledge to achieve understanding between individuals and groups who are representatives of different societies, in the language and within the sociocultural context of one of the parties" [7, p. 11] and as a competence that "includes *knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of the social function of communication*, namely: linguistic knowledge, country studies

knowledge, practical and intercultural skills [7, p. 27]. By the way, intercultural skills, according to the authors of this publication, include: the ability to establish connections between “foreign” and one’s own cultures; cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a range of different strategies to establish contact with representatives of other cultures; the ability (which is extremely important for this article) to act as a mediator between foreign and one’s own cultures and to be able to resolve intercultural misunderstandings and conflict situations, as well as the ability to overcome stereotypes [7, p. 29].

The absence of the concept of “intercultural competence” in national normative documents can be explained primarily by the fact that the CEFR (Ukrainian edition [40]) does not distinguish such a competence, so it is quite understandable that all normative legal documents regulating the teaching of foreign languages in Ukraine are oriented towards the CEFR and build their educational policy on its basis.

At the national level, in the educational normative documents of Germany, the concept of “intercultural competence” is presented as the goal of foreign language learning: “Intercultural competence is an essential element of the educational concept of the upper secondary school. It is manifested in foreign language understanding and foreign language activity. That is why it is called intercultural communicative competence. Its components are *knowledge, attitudes and awareness / consciousness*” [43, p. 8]. Reimann [43] in his article characterises the model of intercultural competence presented in the Educational standards for the continued foreign language (English/French) for the general higher education entrance qualification [2, p. 9] (figure 5).



Fig. 5. Model of intercultural competence presented in the Educational standards for the continued foreign language (English/French) for the general higher education entrance qualification [2, p. 9].

As Reimann [43, p. 8–9] notes, understanding and ability to act are based on knowledge, attitudes and awareness, and intercultural competence, which relies on understanding and ability to act, is actually conscious action. At the same time, according to the author of the article, the previously declared affective, cognitive and activity components of the structure of intercultural competence better describe the realities compared to the proposed in [2].

In the new edition of *Bildungsstandards für die erste Fremdsprache (Englisch/Französisch) für den Ersten Schulabschluss und den Mittleren Schulabschluss* [3], approved by the decision of the Conference of Ministers of Culture of Germany in 2023, two concepts already appear: “intercultural competence” and “pluricultural competence”. Intercultural competence in this document is interpreted as the *ability and readiness* to interact adequately in a communicative and cultural sense (to understand, interpret and produce foreign language texts) in direct or media contact. It is emphasised that “communication arises, among other things, on the basis of *mutual intention* to want to be understood and to understand”, and “communicative action should be considered as an action that takes place in a historical, cultural, social and individual perspective, is determined by personal goals, relevant content and functions”. Given the multicultural composition of German society, this standard takes into account the fact that already at the level of general education, we can talk about the existing intercultural and multilingual skills of students (through family, social, and educational contexts). “This repertoire should be valued, systematically mastered and expanded” [3].

The dynamics of the development of the concept in normative documents at the pan-European level can be traced on the example of two editions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In the editions “Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen” (GER) [1] and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) [23] intercultural competence is not considered as one of the competences. The publication refers to sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness, which are part of declarative knowledge and components of general competence. Sociocultural knowledge includes general knowledge about the society and culture of the community (communities) and features/indicators characteristic of this society (everyday life, living conditions, interpersonal relationships, values, beliefs, attitudes, body language, social agreements, ritual behaviour, etc.). GER (CEFR) 2001 defines intercultural awareness as what arises “from knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relationship” between “one’s own” and “foreign” world”. Therefore, this document emphasises the cognitive side of interculturality: it helps to “realise regional and social differences” and place both cultures “in a broader context” [1, p. 104–105].

In the next edition of the CEFR [24], which was published under the title “Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors”, not only does the concept of “intercultural competence” appear, but also descriptors that allow determining the level of development of intercultural competence, which was not present at the previous stage. The following components of intercultural competence and ability are proposed to be used as descriptors: *ability to deal* with ambiguity when encountering cultural diversity, adjusting reactions, modifying language, etc.; *understanding* that different cultures may have different practices and norms and that actions may be perceived differently by people belonging to other cultures; *ability to take into account* differences in behaviour

(including gestures, tones and attitudes), avoiding excessive generalisations and stereotypes; *ability to recognise* similarities and *use* them as a basis for improving communication; *desire to show* sensitivity to differences; *readiness* to offer and ask for clarification, anticipating possible risks of misunderstandings” [24, p. 158].

Thus, it is obvious that in [24], not only the cognitive side is taken into account (need for understanding, to take into consideration, need to recognise), but also the practical use of acquired intercultural knowledge, readiness for specific communicative actions (to take, to show, to act). In addition, here “intercultural competence” is considered as a separate competence along with other new terms, including “multicultural repertoire” and “multilingual competence” with their descriptors for each level from A1 to C2. The understanding of the term “intercultural competence” has become much broader and includes primarily the ability to act according to the situation, choose and use appropriate verbal and non-verbal language means, master appropriate communicative strategies, and develop personal characteristics that can contribute to successful communication and intercultural interaction (tolerance, empathy, etc.).

Intercultural competence is understood as “the ability to interact with representatives of another culture as sensitively, respectfully and conflict-free as possible. It requires a cognitively and emotionally open personality who is ready to reflect on their standards and prejudices, their ideas about themselves and others, to be tolerant of cultural differences, to have a sense of empathy and to recognise other cultures as equal” [1, p. 140]. Following the given definition, it can be stated that intercultural competence consists of at least three components: emotions and attitudes (tolerance, respect, empathy, reflection), language skills, intercultural knowledge, ability to compare and analyse (cognitive side) and appropriate actions (patterns of behaviour).

The Council of Europe has also developed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [25], which is “intended for use by educators in all sectors of education systems”, where intercultural competence is one of the key ones.

The actual definition of the concept “intercultural competence” is found in a glossary of key terms included in the Reference Framework of Competence for Democratic Culture:

Intercultural competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations. More specifically, it involves a *combination of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding applied through action* which enables one to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself;
- respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people;
- establish positive and constructive relationships with such people.

“Respect” means that one has positive regard for, appreciates and values the other; “appropriate” means that all participants in the situation are equally satisfied that the interaction occurs within expected cultural norms; and “effective” means that all involved are able to achieve their objectives in the interaction at least in part. [26]

In addition, the glossary also contains a definition of another important concept for us – “intercultural dialogue”:

Intercultural dialogue is an open exchange of views, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue fosters constructive engagement across perceived cultural divides, reduces intolerance, prejudice and stereotyping, and contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase cooperation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote respect for the other. [26]

Analysis of educational standards of Ukraine and Germany showed that in the State standard of Ukraine for basic secondary education, despite the absence of the concept of “intercultural competence”, there are knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities in the description of key, civic and social competence that act as structural components of intercultural competence in scientific discourse and in the Common European Framework of Reference [40] and in the Additional Volume to them [24]. Thus, in the State standard of Ukraine for basic secondary education, *skills and abilities* (ability to communicate in foreign languages, use communication skills and multilingualism), *knowledge* (knowledge of foreign languages, awareness of individual and social stereotypes); *attitudes/disposition* (readiness for intercultural dialogue, openness to cultural diversity, appreciation of diversity, tolerance) are highlighted.

Unlike the Ukrainian standard, in the German Educational standards for the first foreign language (English/French) for the first school leaving certificate and the intermediate school leaving certificate, the concept of “intercultural competence” is present and is considered as “ability and readiness [...] to interact (understand, interpret, produce foreign language texts)” [3]. In addition, it is necessary to take into account the existing intercultural knowledge and multilingual skills of students, which should be valued and multiplied in the process of learning a foreign language.

Documents at the pan-European level in recent years not only define the concept of “intercultural competence” and its structural components but also contain descriptors for each level of language proficiency. The structure of the concept includes:

- knowledge about culture, understanding of values, ways of thinking, rules of communication, differences, awareness of diversity, ability to analyse (analytical-strategic abilities according to [35]) (the cognitive component);
- attitudes, disposition, desire to show sensitivity, respect, tolerant attitude to “otherness”, empathy, reflection (affective);
- skills, abilities, ability to interact, and ability to perform certain actions (behavioural).

The documents emphasise the need to use a person’s multilingualism and multiculturalism as a specific capital to multiply it through the study of new foreign languages and other cultures. It is through multilingual education and under the condition of achieving a certain level of intercultural competence that we can talk about intercultural dialogue.

5 Conclusions

The essence of the concept of “intercultural competence” has developed over the past two decades both at the level of theoretical research and in normative documents of the educational sphere. Changes in interpretation are primarily related to changes in the structure of societies, robust integration processes, migration and informatisation, which prompted direct or indirect contact between representatives of different linguistic and cultural communities and their interaction in the professional or private sphere. If at the beginning of the research, the problem of developing intercultural competence was considered mainly in terms of interaction between citizens of different countries and representatives of different cultural centres in the context of foreign language learning, then due to the heterogeneous ethnic, linguistic, cultural composition of most countries today, the issue of developed intercultural competence as a prerequisite for conflict-free coexistence has become an internal issue, an issue of education. Intercultural competence can be considered as a component of social competence, where the ability to coexist without conflict, communicate, and adapt in society is important. It is not only about the interaction of people who speak different languages but also about those who belong to different social groups, have different political preferences, and have different levels of education. Similarly, for intercultural competence in the context of learning foreign languages, those personal qualities that, as structural elements, belong to both intercultural and social competencies must be inherent in learners from the very beginning.

Despite the fact that a large number of scientists from different countries have attempted to define the essence and structure of the concept of “intercultural competence”, there is no unambiguous, agreed opinion in scientific discourse. At each stage of research, components were added that, according to the social situation, emphasised new needs. However, the common vision is that intercultural competence should ensure effective, conflict-free interaction between representatives of different cultures. Among scientists, there is an agreed position that the structure of the concept consists of three components: affective (attitude,

disposition), cognitive (knowledge, understanding, awareness, analysis) and behavioural (patterns of behaviour), the content of which shows certain differences in different authors.

Analysis of normative documents also indicates the development of the concept in accordance with the realities and challenges of the time. This is eloquently evidenced by two editions of the Common European Framework of Reference [23, 24] and educational standards on the example of two countries (Ukraine and Germany), where changes are apparent compared to the beginning of the 21st century. Focusing on the needs in education, the standards reflect those abilities that are in demand in national contexts. The State standard of Ukraine for basic secondary education, despite the fact that it does not contain the concept of “intercultural competence”, reflects what is included in its structure, namely, emphasises the ability to communicate and act in native and foreign languages. It is worth noting that in the domestic standard, knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities that belong to intercultural competence are found in the description of key, civic and social competencies. Thus, what is a trend in the European context is already declared at the level of the state standard in Ukraine.

The German educational standards for the first foreign language emphasise the development of both intercultural and multicultural competence, taking into account the actual language situation in educational institutions in Germany. Here, the emphasis is on multilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as the need for maximum use and expansion of the language repertoire.

Thus, summarising the above, by **intercultural competence**, we understand *the ability to interact with representatives of another (in terms of ethnic, religious, linguistic, social characteristics) community on the basis of respect, positive attitude, tolerance, consciously choosing appropriate strategies, tactics, linguistic means to achieve understanding and prevent conflicts, based on knowledge (language, culture, ways of thinking, patterns of behaviour, rules) and their practical application.*

This definition incorporates the key elements that emerged from our review of the literature. Of course, the definition of the concept could be better, and new features will be acquired in accordance with the dynamic changes in society due to the complexity and multifaceted nature of its essence. The structure and component composition of the concept will need further attention primarily to understand the process of developing intercultural competence in foreign language education and the interdisciplinary dimension.

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