

## РОМАНСЬКІ МОВИ

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.32838/2710-4656/2022.1-1/35>**Zhuk V. A.**

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### OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

*The article reveals the problem of overcoming barriers within intercultural communication. The author analyzes different types of barriers, defines their specific features, causes and effective ways to overcome obstacles in the process of communication. The article focuses on the necessity to form linguocultural competence contributing to efficiency of ethnocultural interaction.*

*In today's cultural space, intercultural communication is of great importance, so it is especially important to achieve mutual understanding and overcome obstacles in various areas of communication. In the process of communication within intercultural environment, it is necessary to take into account the linguistic and cultural characteristics of different countries, the differences and varieties of which can lead to certain difficulties in mutual understanding, the so-called language barriers. The urgency of the problem is due to the need to form the linguistic and cultural competence of the individual, which will contribute to the effectiveness of language communication, overcoming various types of communication barriers. Communication barriers that arise in the process of intercultural interaction lead to ineffective communication as well as have certain preconditions and reasons, one of which is the lack of understanding of interlocutor's linguistic and cultural characteristics. The purpose of this article is to consider the types of communication barriers, analyze their specifics and causes, outline ways of overcoming them. In general, barriers are understood as problems that arise in the process of interaction, hinder it, and reduce its effectiveness. Obstacles include stereotypes, language errors, and various abilities of world perception. Thus, the article analyzes different types of barriers, outlines their specific features, causes and effective ways of overcoming them. The need to form linguistic and cultural competence, which will contribute to the effectiveness of international cooperation, is emphasized. Having reviewed various classifications of barriers, it should be recognized that the formation of linguistic and cultural competence as well as increasing the role of communication between people of different nationalities can be only achieved with careful consideration of socio-cultural factors.*

**Key words:** barrier, linguistic and cultural communication, obstacle, socio-cultural, cultural space, competence, culture.

**Formulation of the problem.** In the contemporary cultural space, intercultural communication is becoming extremely topical, so it is especially important to achieve mutual understanding and overcome obstacles in various areas of communication. In times of rapid globalization, communication opportunities are expanding, some common information space is being formed, and intercultural ties in economics, politics, science, culture, and education are being strengthened. In the process of communication in the intercultural environment, it is necessary to take into account the linguistic and cultural characteristics of different countries, the differences and varieties of which can lead to certain difficulties in mutual understanding, the so-called language barriers.

Modern linguistic studies hold the view that “the effectiveness of language communication largely depends on cultural factors that significantly affect not only the elements of the language code (e.g., semantics of individual words or phrases), but also the actual communication process, its components, principles and rules of communication as well as communicative strategies and tactics” [8, p. 191].

Therefore, modern science recognizes the need to form linguistic and cultural competence by involving the national-cultural component into the foreign language communication as one of the most important means of transmitting national culture and developing communicative consciousness of the individual, which provides the process of his/her speech.

Psychological, sociological and linguistic directions can be distinguished in the research of intercultural communication. This distribution depends on both the object of the study and the used methods. Linguists are primarily interested in how the communication process takes place. What in the language message signals on the presence of intercultural interaction? What exactly characterizes the messages of people from different cultures? In what communicative contexts does this manifest itself? How do any misunderstandings occur? What language features and mechanisms allow or do not allow to avoid misunderstandings?

#### **Analysis of recent researches and publications.**

Consideration of the phenomena of culture and communication in their inseparable connection is carried out in the works of such philosophers as: L. Wittgenstein, J. Habermas, G. Gadamer, O. Spengler and others. The concept of intercultural communication emerges in the middle of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and is associated with the names of such scientists as: E. Goll, C. Kluckhohn, A. Kroeber, R. Porter, D. Trager, L. Samovar. Mention should be also made of some Western researchers who developed theories of intercultural communication that tried to explain this phenomenon from different points of view: K. Berger, S. Huntington, E. Hirsch, E. Goll, G. Hofstede, S. Dahl [5, p. 1]. In addition, some researchers are actively exploring the training of future professionals in various fields of intercultural communication. Problems of speech activity and communication attracted the attention of L. Vygotsky, V. Humboldt, and V. Skalkin. Subject field of domestic researches in the field of intercultural communication today is in the process of formation; N. Vysotska, L. Gubersky, I. Dziuba, P. Donets, G. Kasyanov, M. Kushnaryova, O. Cherednichenko and others are working on it [5, p. 2]. The urgency of the problem is due to the need to form the linguistic and cultural competence of the individual, which will contribute to the effectiveness of language communication, overcoming various types of communication barriers. A review of contemporary Ukrainian and foreign literature shows that communication barriers that arise in the process of intercultural interaction lead to ineffective communication, have certain preconditions and reasons, one of which is the lack of understanding of linguistic and cultural features of the interlocutor. The purpose of this scientific research is to consider the types of communication barriers, to analyze the specifics and causes of their occurrence as well as to outline ways to overcome them. In general, barriers are understood as problems

that arise in the process of interaction, hinder this interaction and reduce its effectiveness.

**Presenting the main part.** The current level of understanding of the problem is limited to various attempts to classify barriers to communication. Thus, according to some researchers, there are six barriers within intercultural communication: the assumption of similarities (people think they are the same); linguistic differences (ignoring the ambiguity of words); misinterpretation of nonverbal behavior; influence of stereotypes; the desire to evaluate unfamiliar cultural phenomena; anxiety due to the uncertainty of the behavior of another communicator [4, p. 34]. Proponents of the other view divide all the barriers into two major groups: barriers of comprehension (phonetic, semantic, stylistic, sociocultural) and barriers of communication (temperament, fear, shame, and other emotional states). Another classification of communication barriers was proposed by the Russian researchers S. Bobrova and O. Smirnova, who identify historical, geographical, political, departmental, economic, technical, linguistic, psychological, etc. barriers [3, p. 95]. This analysis shows the lack of a single point of view on the definition of the concept and types of communication barriers.

Scientific articles use the term “barriers” or “boundaries” to describe the reasons that disrupt communication. The researcher O. Sadokhin believes that this distinction is justified by the following circumstance: different types of communication barriers are caused by different reasons, have different effects as well as different consequences, both minor and those that cause global conflicts [7:15]. In the first case, the communication process decreases qualitatively, but does not stop. Here we should talk about obstacles that do not create unbreakable boundaries between partners. For example, when communicators lack vocabulary in foreign language communication, they do not stop communicating, but turn to nonverbal or paraverbal means. Therefore, barriers should be considered as factors that only reduce the quality of communication, but do not stop it.

Obstacles include stereotypes, language errors, and various abilities of worldview. Barriers significantly hinder the interaction and mutual understanding of partners. The causes of communication barriers can be religious, social differences, differences in traditions, norms and values that determine the means and goals of communication. Ignoring communication barriers can be a serious obstacle to effective intercultural

interaction. One way to overcome and eliminate them is to develop personal linguistic and cultural competence. "Linguistic and cultural competence is one of the most important concepts of intercultural communication; knowledge of basic elements of culture (national customs, traditions, realities, etc.) of the country in whose language the communication is carried out; the ability of the speaker to discover local information and use it in order to achieve the planned communicative goal; ability to carry out intercultural communication, which involves knowledge of lexical units with national-cultural (ethnocultural) component, semantics and skills of their adequate use in situations of intercultural communication, as well as the ability to use background knowledge to achieve mutual understanding in situations of indirect and direct intercultural communication" [2:35]. In the direct interaction of partners, intercultural barriers between them are manifested as misunderstanding of the interlocutor, caused by different levels of communicators' intercultural competence. At the same time, as O. Sadokhin explains, communicative competence involves not only the grammatical correspondence of the language, but also acceptability of statements in accordance with the rules of interaction and behavior in a particular culture.

The emergence of a situation of misunderstanding involves two ways of overcoming intercultural barriers: the cessation of communication and its continuation after a series of necessary agreements. The way in which communicators assess the situation of communication and determine their attitude to each other will depend on the choice of how to overcome barriers. Intercultural barriers at the level of relationships in practice manifest themselves as misunderstandings, mutual mistrust, alienation. When personal life experience is used as a basis for communication, it can be completely unacceptable for a particular partner. In addition, as some researchers believe, in intercultural communication it is impossible to expect from a partner identical rules of conduct, which are determined by the characteristics of his/her culture. As a result, situations of insecurity arise during communication, for example, when using forms of greeting or forgiveness, apology and other common forms of behavior. For example, the Americans who spoke Japanese well and lived in Japan for some time, noted communication barriers caused by differences in "Western" and "Eastern" communication styles: the Japanese consistently developed expressions linearly, adhered to age or seniority,

and waited patiently until the interlocutor completes the statement; the Western culture representatives consider it perfectly normal to express their point of view at any time, to present counterarguments, to discuss, and to insist on their own. To overcome this type of intercultural barrier, scholars believe, it is necessary to have knowledge about cultural differences and the possibility of their appearance during communication. In such situations, it is necessary to take measures to make communicators be aware of these barriers and to show mutual interest in continuing the communication process.

Stereotypes have a great influence on the communication process. From the early 70's of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, a more detailed study of specific forms and types of stereotypes starts. However, stereotypes continue to be perceived as carriers of false information, which negatively affects the ability to be properly understood in the process of intercultural communication. As a result, such bias contradicts the main function of communication – to establish interaction between countries and ethnic groups, national groups, religious organizations in order to maintain the integrity of the world socio-cultural structure. It is clear that at the initial stage of communication quite a significant information load causes a certain protective reaction on the part of the brain in the form of appropriate stereotypes.

These are mechanisms for the formation of stereotypes, the basis for which is a person's tendency to accept the situation of a stranger, based on their cultural experience. However, it would be wrong to perceive the concept of "stereotype" only in a negative sense. Thus, being aware of the traditions and customs of another culture, a person can easily and much faster adapt to a new language environment. He will be free from misconceptions about the rules of conduct in a broad sense in an unfamiliar society; will not try to transfer their stereotypical standards of perception to the environment. However, in most situations, stereotypes lead to negative consequences in the process of communication, prevent the correct understanding of the motives of interlocutor's behavior, even with a sufficient level of language training. Thus, when communicating with native English speakers, for example, the Americans, especially if it is a common acquaintance, the Ukrainians, based on their own understanding of the correct model of behavior, may ask such a question as: "Did he earn a lot of money?", which is completely incorrect from the point of view of grammar as well as the rules of conduct in a given society. In the last resort, you can ask about a US

citizen's financial situation in the form: "Did he come out all right? / Did he do well?"

There are a large number of such examples that show the existence of real problems among the foreigners in trying to establish an adequate communication process. Thus, there is a transfer of certain laws of their culture to another, despite the fact that in a new society, completely different household stereotypes may function for us. That is, stereotypes are inherent in any culture, because they mature within the culture, and then influence the minds of people, hindering or helping to build interethnic contacts. In contrast to the levels, the types of intercultural barriers are determined by the presence in intercultural communication of the following main areas within which the interaction of communicators unfolds: language, ethnocultural, communicative and psychological areas. Based on this, O. Sadokhin also identifies four main groups of intercultural communication barriers: language, ethnocultural, communicative and psychological. Each species has its own characteristics, requiring appropriate ways to overcome these barriers. The linguistic aspect of intercultural communication has a complex structure and is represented by a variety of components (genre diversity, dialects, literary language, slang, etc.).

To achieve effective communication, it is necessary to choose from a wide range of means of communication that are acceptable for a particular communication situation. A person with inherent linguistic competence is able to use common language forms that are accessible and understandable to all those involved in intercultural communication. When participants have different levels of language competence, phonetic, semantic and stylistic barriers arise. The stylistic barrier of misunderstanding can destroy normal interpersonal communication. It occurs when there is a mismatch between the communicator's language style and communication situation or the language style and the current psychological state of the communication partner.

Thus, the scientific style of speech is inappropriate in resolving working moments with employees at the enterprise, or the official-business style of speech – in a situation of confidential conversation. The semantic barrier to comprehension is related to the fact that participants use different meanings of words. The reasons may be: limited vocabulary of one of the interlocutors; national, religious, social, cultural, psychological, professional, group and other differences; discrepancy between the language means used by the communicator and the language

resources of the recipient; individual characteristics of the recipient, especially the ability to operate with the language as a means of thinking.

In the process of intercultural communication, according to L. E. Orban-Lembrick, "the semantic barrier consists of different systems of meanings in the language of communication partners – thesauri" [6, p. 25]. Thesaurus is a plurality of semantic units with a given system of semantic relations, a linguistic dictionary of the language. The variety of meanings of words and the situationality of their use is a difficulty faced by speakers in the process of intercultural communication.

The researchers have estimated that, for example, the average American adult often uses 500 words, each with a meaning of 20 to 25. In the process of communicating with so many words, we have to distinguish 12,500 different meanings.

Semantically incorrect use of words can be illustrated by the following examples: Mr. Brown is keeping a stick in his hand (Mr. Brown holds a stick in his hand). Mr. Brown holds horses at the farm. As you know, the meaning of the verb "to keep" – to keep in possession, care, support. The verb "to hold" has a different semantic connotation – to hold (in hand), to keep from falling. There are similar examples in the Ukrainian language.

Polysemy (ambiguity) of the word "horn" contributes to the fact that the interpretation of this word differs in different conditions. For example, a peasant is more likely to interpret the word "horn" as "a solid growth on an animal's head", and a citizen in terms of the density of buildings, the word "horn" will be interpreted as "angle". The reason for this phenomenon is "the use of the same words by partners to denote different things, the differences between their thesauri", – says L. E. Orban-Lembrick [6, p. 26].

In the communication between a military man and an art critic, the use of professional terms can lead to a complete misunderstanding of communicators. Thus, we emphasize once again the need to form linguistic and cultural competence as the main means of overcoming the communication barrier. The barrier of phonetic misunderstanding arises from the communicator's use of slurred pronunciation at an accelerated pace or speech with a large number of parasitic sounds. One of the main reasons for this barrier (especially when perceiving a foreign language) is the underdevelopment of skills in perceiving a foreign language by ear. Phonetic barriers to perception arise due to incorrect pronunciation and incorrect division of morphemes, words, and sentences.

The difficulty of reproducing the sounds of the foreign language is due to some differences in the structure of the speech apparatus. These differences explain erroneous accentuations as well as confusion of words in phrases and sentences, which creates difficulty in understanding verbal information. Improper use of sounds (phonemes) in the flow of speech can lead to some misunderstanding and even misinterpretation of information on both sides. For example, in English, as in Ukrainian, there are cases in which words differ by only one phoneme: pen (pen) – Ben (male name Ben); cap – cab (taxi), etc. In colloquial speech, the nouns given in the examples are often confused: Could you catch a cab? Could you catch a cap?

Unlike language, ethnocultural communication barriers are based on ethnic, religious, social and cultural differences. Here the main reason is one communicator's lack of knowledge about the culture of another communicator. Barriers of this type are due to the peculiarities of mentality, spiritual values and stereotypes that are manifested in communication. Each subject of communication interacts with other people in accordance with the norms, traditions as well as perception of the culture of which he is a carrier.

The language of each nation reflects the world around it, reflects reality and creates its own picture of the world, specific and unique to each language and, accordingly, the people, ethnic group, language group that uses the language as a means of communication.

Overcoming the language barrier is not enough to ensure effective communication between people of different cultures. This requires overcoming the cultural barrier. There are so-called national-specific components of cultures, that is, what creates problems of intercultural communication.

The researchers emphasize that language does not exist outside of culture as a socially inherited set of practical skills and ideas. As one of the types of human activity, language is an integral part of culture, due to the set of results of human activity in various spheres of life: production, social, spiritual. However, as a form of functioning of thinking and, most importantly, as a means of communication, language is inseparable from culture.

At the same time, scientists emphasize, the concept of culture is not just certain cultural information communicated in the language. This is an integral feature of the language, inherent in all its levels and all branches. Thus, in the process of intercultural communication there are many problems, a number of difficulties, among which the language difference

is not the only one. Discrepancies in the perception of the world around the bearers of different cultures can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts. The ethnic specificity of the communicative behavior of other peoples is misinterpreted from the standpoint of their own culture.

Appropriate intercultural communication is impossible without acquaintance with the cognitive basis of the linguistic and cultural community in which the language of communication takes place. G. M. Andreeva distinguishes between communicative barriers of social and psychological nature. On the one hand, such barriers may arise due to a lack of understanding of: a) communication situations caused not only by the different languages spoken by participants in the communication process, but also by b) deeper differences, namely socio-psychological differences between the partners. Such barriers are caused by objective social reasons, the affiliation of communication partners to different social groups, and when they appear, the inclusion of communication in a broader system of common relations is particularly clear. On the other hand, communication barriers may be more psychological. They can occur either c) due to the individual psychological characteristics of those who communicate (eg, excessive shyness, secrecy etc.), or d) due to special psychological relationships that have developed between communication partners: hostility, mistrust of each other etc [1].

Having reviewed the various classifications of barriers, analyzing possible ways to overcome them, it should be recognized that the formation of linguistic and cultural competence, increasing the role of learning communication, communication between people of different nationalities can be achieved only with careful consideration of socio-cultural factors. Many years of practice of teaching foreign languages in isolation from the actual process of communication has led to the fact that the cultural aspects of the language appeared to be in the shadow remaining unclaimed.

There were some significant omissions in the teaching foreign languages in the post-Soviet space. As one of the most important and effective conditions for overcoming this shortcoming, experts see the expansion and deepening of the role of the intercultural component in the development of communication skills of communication participants. All the subtleties and the depth of the problems of interlingual and intercultural communication become especially obvious, and sometimes just conscious, when comparing

foreign languages with native ones, foreign cultures – with national cultures. The key issue in overcoming the urgent problem of overcoming barriers in the process of communication between people of different peoples and cultures is that languages should be studied in inseparable unity with the world and culture of the peoples who speak these languages. Teaching people to communicate (orally and in writing), teaching to produce, create, maintain communication, and not just understand a foreign language – is a major problem, complicated by the need for deeper and more thorough study of native speakers' worldview, their culture in a broad ethnographic sense, their way of life as well as national character, mentality etc.

The ability to use all linguistic means, styles of communication, unimpeded interaction and mutual understanding of the communicators is largely determined by the knowledge of social and cultural life of the community that speaks this language.

It is worth noting that now a very popular and extremely necessary is a modern scientific field, called "social psychology of difficult communication". It was formed on the border of sociology, psychology,

philosophy, ethnography, culturology and conflict. In a broad context, this field of knowledge explores current issues of communication and social interaction, namely difficulties, failures, barriers, conflicts etc. These are all types and forms of communication that cause destructive changes in the behavior of partners: the severance of contacts and termination of communication, low awareness of barriers to communication, inability or unwillingness to overcome them on their own. The parameters of the analysis are the degree, depth, intensity of expression of obstacles. Difficult communication is characterized by the continuity of contacts between partners; a certain degree of awareness of the participants of the interaction about the existing difficulties; search for reasons that complicate communication; attempts to overcome social-perceptual, communicative and interactive difficulties on their own.

It is impossible to determine all the scientific achievements on this problem within one article. But the need to find ways to reduce and overcome communication barriers in intercultural communication in the context of globalization is extremely relevant today.

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#### **Жук В. А. ПОДОЛАННЯ БАР'ЄРІВ В МІЖКУЛЬТУРНІЙ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ**

*У статті розглядається проблема подолання бар'єрів у міжкультурній комунікації. Проаналізовано різні типи бар'єрів, окреслено їх специфічні риси, причини виникнення та ефективні шляхи подолання перешкод міжкультурного спілкування. Акцентується потреба формування лінгвокультурної компетенції, що сприятиме ефективності міжнародної взаємодії.*

*У сучасному культурному просторі міжкультурна комунікація набуває великого значення, тому особливо важливим є досягнення взаєморозуміння і подолання перепон у різних сферах спілкування. В процесі комунікації в міжкультурному середовищі необхідно брати до уваги лінгвокультурні особливості представників різних країн, відмінності і різновиди яких можуть призвести до певних труднощів у взаєморозумінні, до так званих мовних бар'єрів. Актуальність порушеної проблеми зумовлена потребою формування лінгвокультурної компетенції особистості, що сприятиме ефективності мовної комунікації, подоланню різних видів комунікативних бар'єрів. Комунікативні бар'єри, які виникають в процесі міжкультурної взаємодії призводять до неефективного спілкування, мають певні передумови і причини, однією з яких є брак розуміння лінгвокультурних особливостей співрозмовника. Мета даної статті – розглянути види комунікативних бар'єрів, проаналізувати специфіку та причини виникнення, окреслити шляхи їх подолання. У загальному значенні бар'єри розуміють як проблеми, що виникають в процесі взаємодії, перешкоджають їй,*

знижують її ефективність. До перешкод вчені відносять стереотипи, мовні помилки, різні здібності світосприйняття.

Проаналізовано різні типи бар'єрів, окреслено їх специфічні риси, причини виникнення та ефективні шляхи подолання перешкод міжкультурного спілкування. Акцентується потреба формування лінгвокультурної компетенції, що сприятиме ефективності міжнародної взаємодії. Оглянувши різні класифікації бар'єрів, проаналізувавши можливі шляхи їх подолання, варто визнати, що формування лінгвокультурної компетенції, підвищення ролі навчання комунікації, спілкуванню між людьми різних національностей може бути досягнуто тільки при чіткому врахуванні соціокультурного фактору.

**Ключові слова:** бар'єр, лінгвокультурна комунікація, перешкода, соціокультурний, культурний простір, компетенція, культура.