

FORMATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF FUTURE SPECIALISTS IN TOURISM

Gulnara A. Rizakhojayeva* Madina M. Akeshova* Ayman K. Rysbekova*
Akmaral S. Karpykbayeva* Mariya B. Jazdykbayeva*
and Alena Yu. Baltabayeva*

Abstract: Competence in foreign language teaching is often understood as a “communicative competence”. Level of communicative competence formation has great influence on further professional activity of specialists in any field. Our research paper is devoted to the problem of future tourism specialists’ communicative competence formation while teaching foreign languages. In the conducted experimental work there were two groups: control group and experimental group. Representatives of both groups were students of “Management and Tourism” department, International Kazakh-Turkish University named after Yassawi. In control group, classes were held in a traditional way, while in experimental groups they included critical thinking.

The use of information-communicational technologies in teaching system shows a significant improvement and higher achievement by the students. The improvement is also represented by higher average grades of the experimental group and shows the effectiveness of integration of the traditional approach and using the critical thinking technologies in training of the future specialists.

Keywords: Communicative competence, critical thinking, foreign language, teaching, tourism specialists.

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of research

Globalization and informatization of the society have a significant impact on the system of foreign languages teaching in connection with the signing the Bologna Declaration by Kazakhstan, the global integration of Kazakhstan’s education, and the creation of a single European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process). Advanced proficiency in foreign languages becomes a macroeconomic factor that leads to the formation of the demand for professionals with a high level of professional communicative competence meaning that a modern specialist must have a high knowledge of a foreign language.

XXIst century is a century of mutual integration of cultures. This integration is possible, provided the relevant professional communicative competence of present specialists in various fields of science and industry, which is ensured, above all, via a high level of knowledge in foreign languages. After all, language is an essential means of communication used by people to communicate between individuals.

It is important that the accession of Kazakhstan as a member of the Bologna process in the European educational space portends the development of global

* International Kazakh-Turkish University named after Yassawi, 161200, Kazakhstan, Turkestan, B. Sattarkhanov Ave., 29

international requirements for the professional and communicative competence of specialists. Scrupulous analysis of theoretical research helps to determine the global international requirements of competence-based approach, the essence of which is illuminated by the continuity of the idea of “lifelong education”.

Meanwhile, there are some circumstances testifying in favor of the fact that foreign languages are really in demand in the world: 1) globalization, integration of social processes; 2) international integration in the field of education; 3) access to global experience and knowledge, availability of information, opportunity to get national and abroad education. The theory and practice of modern education have to be modified: the foreign language professional communicative competence is becoming the most important quality of modern scientists (Valeeva, Koroleva, and Sakhapova, 2015).

Of great importance for Kazakhstan is the integration into the developed countries of the world, multilingualism plays a great role for the citizens of our state. For the implementation of the development strategy of Kazakhstan in 2050, specialists of all fields of activity should speak at least two foreign languages. Our country should be based on the practice of the European countries where the European Council comes to the forefront of multilingualism problem: knowledge of every citizen of Europe of minimum two foreign languages, one of which, speaking fluently. Along with English, the most studied languages in countries with the developed economy are German, followed by French and Italian. These languages do now define language policy in European countries.

To achieve this goal, currently, education in Kazakhstan utilizes the competence approach. Competence Based Approach in education begins from the 1970s of the last century. Since the beginning of its existence, this approach has had exclusive support of the US government in the form of grants for research and innovation for the implementation of this approach. Soon after, in the 1980s, this approach began to be implemented in the educational system of European countries. Since then, this approach, prompted by policy makers and articulated in practice through national standards, has been a source of controversy and debate within the field of education and training (Ollin, 2002). The essence of Competence Based Approach is the necessity of core competences' development. Nowadays, there are a lot of concepts and definitions of competence and competency given by various scientists. However, general for all definitions is the understanding that properties of the personality, potential ability of the individual to cope with various tasks, set of knowledge and skills, are necessary for the realization of any professional activity. According to Coi (Coi and Luca 2007), there is distinction between the concepts of competency and competence where competence consists of three underlying dimensions (competency, context, proficiency level). Competency represents a skill, the context represents the domain in which the skill is performed in, and proficiency level represents the level at which the competence is mastered. Thus, competence

can be defined as “effective performance within a domain/context at different levels of proficiency”, which was originally made in (Khatamiand Hassankiadeh, 2015). Cooper (Cooper, 2000)notes on the possibility of teaching competences, that the competences formation occur by iceberg model, where knowledge and skills compile its visible part, but personal futures and motives are hidden “under the sea level” as they are too difficult to be developed in the process of studying. S. Parry distinguishes “soft” and “tough” competences. “Tough” competences belong to specific professional features (knowledge and abilities), whereas “soft”– to personal features (character, temperament, values) (Koenig, 2011).

Competence in foreign language teaching is often understood as a “communicative competence” (Lim, and Griffith, 2016). As noted by R.P. Milrud (Milrud 2004), competence approach only partially corresponds to the content of the communicative competence. Key competencies show that language education can meet the requirements of life, if narrowly understood communicative competence (willingness to communicate) is supplemented by the preparation for real-life communication.

National Research Council distinguishes cognitive competencies, interpersonal competencies, intrapersonal competencies. Components of each type of competencies are described in Figure 1.

Cognitive competencies	Academic Mastery
	Critical Thinking
	Creativity
Interpersonal competencies	Communication and collaboration
	Leadership
	Global awareness
Intrapersonal competencies	Growth mindset
	Learning how to learn
	Intrinsic motivation
	Grit

Figure 1: Component stucture of the XXIst century competencies

Cognitive category includes proficiency of core academic content, including language arts, foreign languages. Cognitive competencies also include critical thinking and creativity, both of which, according to our opinion, play an important role in formation of communicative competence in future specialists.

Interpersonal category covers the competencies that students need to relate to other people. The essence of these competencies lies on the basic capacity to communicate (Pellegrino and Hilton 2013).

The intrapersonal category includes the competencies "...that reside within the individual and aid him or her in problem solving..."(Pépiot, 2008).

Communication is identified as a vital competence in works of most researches we analyzed. For instance, Pellegrino and Hilton suggest communication is vital to facilitate teamwork and lies at the core of empathy, trust, conflict resolution and negotiation (Soland, Hamilton, and Stecher, 2014).

The communicative approach is crucial for language education, in our country and abroad. In this regard, the content of training includes language, speech, socio-cultural knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure the formation of the communicative competence, *i.e.*, ability and willingness to use a foreign language in the process of intercultural communication in typical situations of oral and written communication.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, abbreviated as CEFR or CEF is an important document developed by the Council of Europe between 1989 and 1996 in order to standardize language teaching, learning and assessing across Europe. In CEFR, communicative competence is taken into consideration as knowledge. It has three basic components: language (linguistic) competence, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic competence. Language competence stands for the knowledge of and the ability to use language resources to form well-structured sentences/utterances. Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge and ability to use language appropriately in any given social context including the awareness of the politeness notions of the target language culture, taboos, address forms, register differences, turn taking, knowing when to speak, when to remain silent as well as the linguistic markers of dialects, accents and so on. Pragmatic competence, the next subcomponent of the term, is subdivided into two sub competences: discourse and functional competences. Discourse competence is required to be able to organize coherent and cohesive stretches of speech/written text in terms of register, logical sequencing, rhetorical effect and thematic organization. Functional competence is concerned with using the written or spoken discourse in communication for serving concrete functional goals.

The extensive development of international cooperation and the growing inter-ethnic contacts in the field of tourism necessitate improved training in universities. The novice managers– former students– often suffer from lack of knowledge in foreign language rather than in purely practical subjects. Professional language skills for specialists working in the tourism sector is a sign of professional competence. In this regard, it should be noted that the means of formation of professional communicative competence is learning a foreign language.

In European countries, where tourism is promoted in the first place as a profitable business, there is no issue that universities need to prepare special staff with foreign language skills. This component (knowledge of foreign language, perhaps few languages) is integral to the preparation of qualified tourism managers.

Summarizing the above, it should be noted that under the professional communicative competence we mean a component of cultural identity of a specialist, reflecting the willingness and ability to improve the quality and effective implementation of professional knowledge through the medium of a foreign language in intercultural professional communication. Therefore, it is the teacher of “Foreign language” discipline who is crucially responsible for the formation of professional communicative competence in future specialists (in our case, future specialists in tourism).

The proposed system to form the communicative competence in students on the basis of the development of critical thinking techniques in foreign language learning advantageously differs from the existing ones. The main difference of the developed system is commensurate (conjugate) development of all components of the communicative competence.

The achievement of the communicative competence depends on the development of critical thinking skills including comparing, assessing, evaluating and synthesizing. Critical thinking is a key component in the development of advanced levels of intercultural communicative competence. To communicate with greater proficiency, learners must have critical cultural awareness. That is, they must recognize the cultural context, and cultural proscriptions that bind the interactions, including the use of specific language and register. In this context, critical thinking refers to the ability to apply previously learned information in new or brand new ways and situations. One of the most well-recognized schemata representing critical thinking is Bloom’s taxonomy (Cheetham and Chivers 2005).

Critical thinking is central to effective communication because it allows participants to analyze, evaluate, and act upon communication cues including words, gestures, and other para linguistic features. Effective communicators are able to determine the relevant (and irrelevant) aspects of communication in order to respond in meaningful ways (Cheetham and Chivers 2005; Zimnyaya 2008).

Knowledge of both own and others’ cultures allows speakers to anticipate communication/cultural misunderstandings and navigate a path that minimizes these issues. Critical thinking can help individuals to understand each person’s role within communications and adjust to the situational demands (Cheetham and Chivers 2005).

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FORMATION SYSTEMS(LEGEND: A – THE AUTHOR’S SYSTEM, E – EXISTING SYSTEM, COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FORMATION SYSTEM – FS)

No.	Characteristic (Feature)	FS	
		A	E
1.	Use of computer software and hardware in the didactic process.	+	+
2.	Proportionality (conjugation) of development of professional communicative competence components.	+	–
3.	Combination of traditional and innovative forms of training, using techniques of critical thinking	+	–
4.	Evaluation of students’ individual thesaurus.	+	–
5.	Use of different teaching aids.	+	+
6.	Assessment of the level of formation of each component of professional communicative competence as a latent variable.	+	–
7.	Integrating training, diagnosis and monitoring.	+	+
8.	Implementation and humanistic personality-oriented approach within the education system.	+	+
9.	Optimal combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of educational achievements of students.	+	–
10.	Formation as a result of training a sufficient basis for further professional self-development of the majority of students.	+	–

METHODS

During the experimental work, we chose the following diagnostic methods: surveys, testing, ranking, conversation, observation, expert evaluation, self-test, case studies, critical thinking strategies, study of products in tourism activity of future specialists. The choice of diagnostic methods carried out was depending on the evaluated criteria and it characterizes its performance.

While determining what test to use, the users of assessment had to consider the purposes of assessment. In our case, the purpose was to find out the level of communicative competence formation.

Like most educators, in experimental work we used *multiple choice tests*. Particularly, we used multiple choice tests to check the knowledge of future specialists in tourism as their specialty, on grammar and vocabulary of the English language, and to measure their critical thinking. Nowadays, newer multiple choice tests tend to be computer-based. In multiple choice test, the students were asked to examine reading passages, charts, pictures, paintings and then to draw inferences, analysis, evaluations, deductions, inductions and overall reasonings.

As Kyllonen noted, multiple-choice measures called “situational judgment tests” have been used increasingly, especially to measure competence in communicating and critical thinking. Situational judgment tests present students’ situations, asking them to give the solution of the problem given.

Likert-scale responses are subset of multiple-choice items that warrant additional consideration, given their prevalence in surveys, which are often used to measure the communicative competence. These items ask students to rate themselves on a variety of factors, and responses are usually along a scale such as “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.

Open response questions elicit written responses on paper, PC or other electronic device. Responses to these items often come in the form of written sentences or short essay.

Critical thinking techniques used in experimental work

Story pyramid. This technique along with understanding of the story needs knowledge of vocabulary, and the ability of critical thinking. Students must write required number of words.

- Line 1. Name of the main character
- Line 2. Two words describing the main character.
- Line 3. Three words describing the setting.
- Line 4. Four words stating the problem.
- Line 5. Five words describing one main event.
- Line 6. Six words describing the second event;
- Line 7. Seven words describing the third main event;
- Line 8. Eight words stating the solution of the problem.

Story map. After reading authentic material or text, students are offered to fill the card. Card consists of the main elements of the text. Students can do such activities individually, in pairs and in groups. Cards can be used for the further discussion of the text, retelling, or writing an essay.

Cinquain. It is a five-lined poem. This technique is used for synthesis of material, develop the ability of students to resume the information, express opinion in short utterances. Cinquain can be done as individual task, in pairs, rarely as team work. Borders of the subject depend on creativity of the teacher.

- Line 1. Theme of the poem. In one word – expressed by noun.
- Line 2. Description of the noun by two adjectives.
- Line 3. Description of the action in the frame of this system by three verbs.
- Line 4. Phrase consisting from four words, attitude of the author to the current theme.

Line 5. One word – synonym of the first word given in first line. Word must repeat emotional and philosophical idea of the theme.

Thinking bubbles

1. This activity is to be facilitated by the teacher for the groups collaborating as much as the student who is guessing the word.
2. A vocabulary word is held above a student's head where they cannot see it.
3. The other students in the room collaborate to find the best clues for the vocabulary word.
4. The student calls on each group to give them their best clue/clues (make sure they are giving good academic clues).
5. After AT LEAST 1 clue from EACH group, the student tries to guess the word above them.

Frayer model vocabulary

This technique can be done in many different ways.

1. Vocabulary word goes in the center of a 2x2 grid for each group and one large one for the whole class.
2. Student groups brainstorm words/phrases to place in the upper left corner of their Frayer's card.
3. Groups discuss with the entire class, while a scribe posts the words/phrases to the class on Frayer's card.
4. Each student group uses the class words/phrases to brainstorm their BEST definition and writes it on their group Frayer's card.
5. Each definition is written with different colored markers in the right corner of class Frayer's card, while corrections are made in a polite, productive manner.
6. When finished, the class will have the BEST student made definition in their upper right corner.
7. Students write examples and non-examples in the bottom boxes of their group and class Frayer's cards.

Carouseling

1. Teacher places butcher paper around the room with different question stems, problems or activities.
2. Students are in groups of 2-5 persons in each.
3. Each group has a different colored marker.
4. They go to each poster for 2-4 minutes doing the activity required.

5. After they are prompted by the teacher to switch, they check the other groups response with: a check if they agree or a correction if they disagree explaining why.
6. They then create their own question stem, problem or activity for the upcoming group.

Cubing and think dots

1. Teacher creates a numbered 6 box graphic with varied activities expected from students.
2. Students roll dice to determine which 3 activities to complete.
3. Students work together to record their answers.

Menus

Students work on 2x2 or 3x3 grid in a tic-tac-toe format

1. Activities in each box represent Bloom's type activities, such as:
2. Create a drawing that shows...
3. Write 3 sentences that correctly use the terms _____, _____, and _____.
4. Create a comic strip that includes...
5. Make a game in which players

Pass and play

1. This helps students distinguishing between and creating their own multiple representations.
2. A word problem is posted on a graphic organizer (different problem for each person in the group).
3. Boxes are strategically placed on the graphic organizer with various representations.
4. Students choose the box they like, place their name in the box and complete the activity.
5. When finished, they pass it to the group member to their right.
6. Now everyone has a new problem.
7. They read the new problem, check their partner's box and complete a different box.
8. Continue to pass and play.

Facts and a fib

This helps distinguishing between multiple choice answers.

1. Students write 3 facts and a fib on a sticky about a subject, content or problem.
2. They will trade with a partner to find the fib.

3. Discussions.
4. Instructor clarifies/verifies.

Organization of experimental work

Necessary pedagogical conditions that ensure the effectiveness of formation of the communicative competence in the future specialists in tourism during the learning of a foreign language are:

1. Keeping essential characteristics of professional communicative competence and the principles of its formation;
2. Continuity and integrity of language training in the frame of a foreign language;
3. Variability of language training in the frame of a foreign language;
4. Consideration of the specific specialty of future specialists, as well as the related foreign language learning environment (the number allocated to the study of a foreign language hours according to the curriculum, semester of learning a foreign language, etc.);
5. Adequacy of the scientific and methodological support of the formation of this type of competence objectives and content of training specialists of tourism specialties;
6. Use of a wide range of information technologies and systems in the teaching of foreign languages;
7. Application of scientific methods to diagnose the formed components of professional communicative competence, as well as continuous monitoring of educational activity of students;
8. Judicious mix of traditional and innovative methods and forms of education. In the course of this experiment, critical thinking strategies were implemented to train future experts in tourism.

Experiment on testing systems and technologies of formation of communicative competence of future specialists in tourism was carried out on the basis of the department “Management and Tourism”, Faculty of Social Sciences, Akhmet Yassawi University, Turkestan, Kazakhstan.

The experiment was attended by 40 students of specialty “Tourism”. The experiment was conducted in 2014-2017 via the classical scheme ROXO, where R – formation of the control and experimental groups, X – experimental stimulus (in our case – the use of critical thinking strategies in learning a foreign language) O – initial condition, landmark, current and final control. The aim of the experiment was to evaluate the effectiveness of systems and technologies of formation of communicative competence in students while learning a foreign language (Parry, 1996).

The groups were balanced on qualitative and quantitative characteristics: the experimental and control groups are formed by an equal number of students with an approximately equal quality performance, the organization of learning activities was given equal time, method of control sections was aligned. Varied experimental conditions (i.e., experimental stimulus) was that in the experimental groups the learning process, diagnosis and control were organized via critical thinking strategies, and in the control groups –via traditional forms of learning. Not less important difference between the educational process in the control and experimental groups is the fact that in the experimental groups harmonious (dual and proportionate) formation of all the components of professional communicative competence occurs. This is achieved through the selection and application of multifunctional methods and teaching aids (i.e., allowing to simultaneously address multiple teaching tasks), as well as through continuous monitoring of learning activities of students and regular diagnostics of formation of the components of communicative competence. At the same time, in the control groups forming various components of communication competence are loosely connected processes, because of dominating unidirectional methods and teaching aids.

The experiment was conditionally divided into 3 stages. The first stage was notes, comprising a diagnostic study of the initial level of knowledge, skills and abilities in different kinds of competencies that define the conditions affecting the success of self-development of students. At this stage, the hypothesis of research was specified, methods and means of training, monitoring and diagnostics were selected. The second stage was formation. At this stage of experiment we undertook to form communicative competence of future specialists in tourism in the process of learning a foreign language. At the third (final) stage the effectiveness of the system of formation of communicative competence in students was identified.

Empirical data were processed in accordance with conventional methods of mathematical statistics: finding empirical average, variance and standard deviation; comparing samples to assess the significance of differences between them (the level of significance selected was traditional: 5%); correlation analysis to find a linear equation of the functional dependence between a variable factor (independent dimension) and a variable response (dependent dimension); identification of the correlation coefficient, *i.e.*, the degree of functional relationships between variables. For the processing of the experimental data we used MS Excel 2010. In the experiment, the reliability calculation (confidence level) showed that the experimental data obey the normal distribution law (the bulk of the consequences (68%) falls within the range $[-\sigma; +\sigma]$, and in the interval $[-2\sigma; +2\sigma]$ gets about 95% of all consequence, and only an insignificant amount exceeds these limits, where σ – the consequence of the standard deviation). Consequence of the standard deviation that characterizes the dispersion value (coefficient of variation) of the experimental data equals to 0.10-0.15. Therefore, we can conclude about the

statistical reliability of the data of the experiment, their representativeness and reliability. The pedagogical experiment confirmed the hypothesis we put forward by comparing the average results of ascertaining and control sections. We have solved the objectives that were set at the beginning of the experiment.

The positive experience of applying critical thinking strategies in the process of teaching foreign languages, showed the effectiveness of systems and technologies to form communicative competence in the future specialists proposed by us. The experimental results confirmed the hypothesis of the study that the use of critical thinking strategies in foreign language teaching is effective in the formation of communicative competence in the future specialists in tourism.

RESULTS OF EXPERIMENTAL WORK

The experiment was conducted in 2014 – 2017 at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of “Management and Tourism” Akhmet Yassawi University. Totally 40 students have been involved, 20 of them in the experimental group (EG), 20 – in the control group (CG). In CG there were students of academic groups who started education in 2014, in EG students started education in 2015 (it means that students of CG completed education in 2016, EG – in 2017).

The advantage of the foreign language learning environment at the department “Management and Tourism” is the availability of residual knowledge in students of a foreign language (the first year students, as a rule, recent school graduates).

Disadvantages of foreign language learning environment of the future experts in tourism:

1. Low level of information competence of most students: not all school graduates have competence and awareness in tourism and service;
2. Very poor (essentially “zero”) knowledge of the future specialty and immature individual thesaurus, the first year students, as a rule, have general school knowledge, they haven’t had special education before (in colleges).

In accordance with the logic of research and developed methods of diagnosis, at the beginning of the first semester the levels of formation of components of communicative competence in students were identified. On the basis of the data obtained the proportion of students with low, middle and high levels of formation of the components of communicative competence was determined (Table 1). The presence of students with high and medium level of development of the pragmatic component can be explained by fact that certain first-year students previously trained in institutions of secondary education (college). However, despite the presence of students with a high level of development of the components of communicative competence, significant differences between the control and experimental groups were observed ($p < 5\%$ Table 2).

Experimental verification of the system of formation of communicative competence effectiveness in students of tourist specialties based on critical thinking technology contains two main areas: (1) study of the efficacy of a critical attitude to the solution of problems in the process of learning a foreign language (*i.e.*, use in didactic process of critical thinking techniques); (2) study the effectiveness of the dual process of development of all components of communicative competence.

TABLE 2: LEVELS OF FORMATION OF THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE RESEARCH

Competences	% of students in Experimental Group			% of students in Control Group		
	High	Middle	Low	High	Middle	Low
Linguistic	4	25	71	4	22	74
Sociolinguistic	3	22	75	3	21	76
Pragmatic	2	21	77	2	23	75
Total (communicative)	2	21	77	2	22	76

We can see the condition of the communicative competence level at the beginning of the experiment on Figure 2.

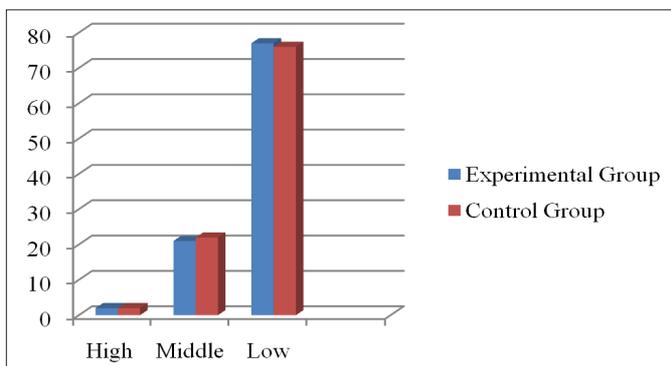


Figure 2: Level of communicative competence at the beginning of the experiment

Investigation of the effectiveness of the process of communicative competence development was carried out via every possible kinds of assignments to students, based on the results of those to assess the levels of formation of different types of competencies. It should be noted that the formation of pragmatic competence affects such factors as parallel study by students of disciplines, such as “Fundamentals of service and tourism”, “Introduction to the specialty”, etc.

However, in the experimental group by the middle of the second stage (the end of the second semester) there was a positive dynamics of the formation of all the components of professional communicative competence more noticeable than in

the control group . This suggests that foreign language classes, based on the use of critical thinking strategies and innovative forms of learning are becoming a factor of pragmatic and professional competences. The levels of development of different competences at the third and final stage of the experiment are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: LEVELS OF FORMATION OF COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN STUDENTS AT THE FINAL STAGE

<i>Competences</i>	<i>% of students in Experimental Group</i>			<i>% of students in Control Group</i>		
	<i>High</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Low</i>
Linguistic	32	52	16	15	34	51
Sociolinguistic	33	54	13	10	35	55
Pragmatic	31	55	14	11	35	54
Total (communicative)	27	51	22	10	30	60

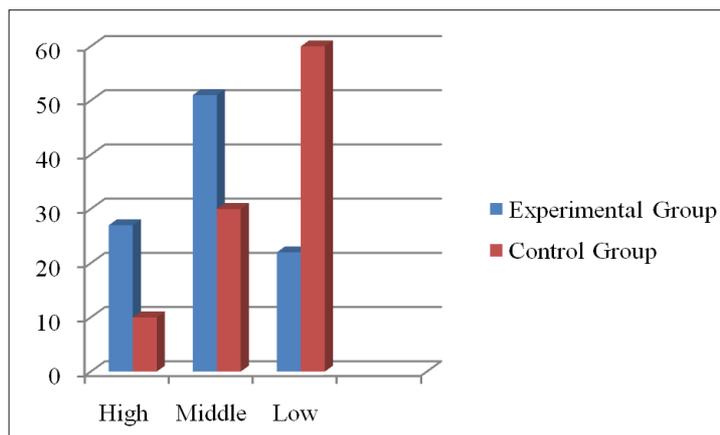


Figure 3: Level of communicative competence at the final stage

Analyzing the level of competence possession at the end of the formative experiment (Figure 3), we can say that the result of the process of teaching was progress, more noticeable in the experimental group.

CONCLUSION

The conducted experiment based on the Akhmet Yassawi University showed high efficiency of systems and technologies of formation of communicative competence in future specialists through the use of critical thinking technology in foreign language learning. Positive results of experiments put significant improvement in the formation of all components of communicative competency of students of experimental groups.

The experimental results showed that joint development of the components of communicative competence and formation of diagnostics, operational control and correction of learning activities of students, judicious use of ICT and critical thinking technologies in the didactic process become an important factor in studying the educational discipline “Foreign language” as a means of teaching the language and communicative culture of the future specialists in tourism.

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