Exchange Students’ Experiences in Intercultural Communication

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Abstract. The paper discusses the intercultural communication competence of Mykolas Romeris University exchange students who were studying at American, Finnish, Czech and German universities. The study explores the frequency of interactions between the exchange students and students from other countries; the difficulties they encountered and the reasons they attributed to these difficulties. Research results, derived from interviews and questionnaires, reveal that about 68% of the exchange students communicated with students from other countries very frequently and more than 85% of the respondents had at least one foreign friend. In this study, 74% of the students reported they had faced difficulties when interacting with foreign students. Cultural differences were regarded as a significant reason to communication difficulties. One of the most notable difficulties was finding a suitable conversation topic to get the conversation going on. Many communicating difficulties derived from stereotypes against other cultures, culture shock and differences in politeness or misunderstandings of nonverbal communication. The paper formulates recommendations for good practice in helping students to develop effective skills of intercultural communication.

Keywords: intercultural communication; student exchange; interpersonal communication skills.