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Intercultural Competence in Teaching Foreign Languages

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Annotation: The article is devoted to search issues on intercultural competence in teaching FL and the use of effective techniques and activities based on developing students' intercultural communicative competence.

Teaching intercultural communication in English broadens cultural awareness of students; they learn not only language but the traditions and customs of the English people, they become more tolerant of other cultures, they start to respect other people's beliefs through their intercultural heritage.

Key words: intercultural communication, competence, culture, cultural diversity, cross-cultural communication, intercultural teaching, content based learning.

Today, intercultural communication is one of the contemporary issues of cultural knowledge, since globalization, spreading in all spheres of life, is becoming increasingly important. As a result of the globalization process, representatives of different countries received the possibility of intercultural communication, which generated interest in intercultural communication and the need for its study. In modern conditions, the pace of globalization and the integration of all life processes and phenomena is rather increasing, which leads to the desire to isolate national cultures, but at the same time, the problem of tolerant relationships between representatives of various cultural communities is of particular importance.

The perception of cultural diversity and cultural differences leads to an understanding of the need for equitable dialogue, the main task of which is to

ensure humane relations between representatives of different national cultures, the adoption of the principles of tolerance and cultural pluralism. The modern world and society increasingly need people who can think creatively, analyze and understand the events around them. And a foreign language is one of the best means to develop these skills. Comparison of countries, people, customs, traditions, cultural heritage stimulates and motivates the desire to increase and deepen the amount of knowledge about other countries and their own country.

Intercultural communication is a communication, carried out in conditions of such significant cultural differences in the communicative competence of its participants, that these differences significantly affect the success or failure of a communicative event. Under this, communicative competence is understood as knowledge of the symbol systems used in communication and the rules of their functioning, as well as the principles of communicative interaction.

Intercultural communication is characterized by the fact that its participants' direct use of special language variants and discursive strategies that are different from those they use when communicating within the same culture. Frequently used term "cross-cultural communication" usually refers to the study of a particular phenomenon in two or more cultures and has the added value of comparing the communicative competence of communicating representatives of different cultures.

The main goal of learning a foreign language is seen in the formation of communicative and intercultural competences among pupils.[1]

In the process of learning foreign languages, both competencies are formed inter connectedly: intercultural competence is formed on the basis of communicative and in the process of its development. This emphasizes the cultural

[1] Mirolyubov A.A. Culture orientation in teaching foreign languages // Foreign languages at school. - 2001. - № 4.

orientation of learning, that is, by introducing students to the culture of the country of the language being studied, to realize the culture of their own country, the ability to present it with the means of a foreign language[2].

Intercultural communication is considered as a process of communication (verbal and non-verbal) between people who are carriers of different cultures and languages or, otherwise, as a set of specific processes of interaction between people belonging to different cultures and languages.

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the target culture from many angles, teachers need to present their students with different kinds of information by accumulating a great deal of courseware. The list below shows some possible sources of information which can be used as materials for teaching culture. By using a combination of visual, audio and tactile materials, teachers are also likely to succeed in addressing the different learning styles of their students.

Table 1

Types of information sources in teaching culture

Extracts from literary	**Information sources**	Multimedia software
Internet		DVD & CDs
Films & TV		Illustrations
Encyclopedias		Video
Literature		Newspapers, magazines
Background information		Interviews
Anecdotes		Photographs
Fieldwork		Plays & songs

[2] Byram M. Teaching foreign languages for intercultural competence // Cultural aspects of language education: a collection of scientific papers. - M .: Evroshkola, 1998.

Intercultural teaching and learning is based on the formula "from language facts to culture facts; from culture facts to language facts" and directed at forming the "second language personality" and the certain communicative skills which are necessary for undertaking the intercultural interaction. This approach presupposes to study the national-cultural features and differences between the target and native languages and aims for forming an intercultural/cross-cultural competence where the *thesaurus of lexicon* and *thesaurus of conceptual world picture* of the native speakers are to develop. So, teaching EL is integral to teaching culture as a set of beliefs, values and norms shared by community members, serving their self-identity with this social group. This competence related to cultural awareness influences the productivity of intercultural communication. The result of forming/developing the "second language personality" is a set of knowledge, abilities and skills for productive undertaking of intercultural communication.

First of all, teachers should encourage students to collect information, and they can use encyclopedias, multimedia software and the internet for the required material. Students will try every means possible to get the knowledge themselves instead of waiting for it. In addition, they will analyze the information and select what material best fits their cultural topics.

Under the intercultural approach the culture becomes the means of cognitive activity and language itself is a means of receiving new information about world picture of the English language speakers. Intercultural teaching and learning is implemented through content-based and context-based language instruction. Content-based teaching of culture focuses on culture-related information, while context-based instruction emphasizes real-world situations where people need to behave in culturally appropriate way. Content-based teaching is knowledge-oriented and context-based instruction is skill-oriented.

Intercultural knowledge as a generalized experience of a certain national community, reflected in the mind as a language form (in the form of individual words, phrases, phraseological units, proverbs and sayings). It includes: knowledge on the history of the country which is the language being studied, knowledge on the traditions and customs of the people, religion, and knowledge of the characteristics of people's everyday life;

Intercultural competence includes the following:

a) the ability to analyze the linguistic and intercultural information contained in proverbs;
b) mastering different ways of using cultural elements in speech,
c) the ability to creatively use the homonyms in various speech situations and dialogues;

K.D. Ushinsky states that the teacher should organize training in such a way that the students able to learn more independently and the task of the teacher has to manage the independent work and provide the necessary material. The scientist emphasized that "independent thoughts flow only from independently acquired knowledge"[3]

Thus, a modern approach to language education implies not only the development of students' ability to use means of communication (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), but also:

- the transfer of extra-language information to the student, necessary for adequate communication and interaction;

- development in him of such qualities as benevolence, tolerance, ability to empathy, etc., allowing him to carry out direct (listening, speaking) and mediated (reading and writing) communication with representatives of other cultures.

[3] Ushinskiy K. D. Sobranie sochineniy. T. 2 M-L .: Izdatelstvo APN RSFSR, 1948. – p356.

Teaching language as a means of intercultural communication, the learning process is organized in such a way that it opens a “window to another world” for the student and thereby expands his understanding of his own being. It is important to use authentic texts and authentic information.

Preparing students for intercultural communication in a foreign language lesson in the context of a dialogue of cultures can improve the efficiency of teaching a foreign language, form a positive motivation to learn a language; to develop a benevolent and interested attitude to the culture and people of their country and the country of the language being studied, to realize and recognize the priority of universal values over class and group, to better understand the need for universal and national interests.

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