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INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON LINGVO-CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS

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Abstract

Over the last decades the relationship between language and culture has become one of the most important issues in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. The teaching of culture has become a more central element, and culture has acquired a more central role in the foreign language curriculum, in our pedagogical thinking and classroom practice. With the new formulation of the problem of teaching foreign languages, it became obvious that a radical increase in the level of instruction in communication, communication between people of different nationalities can be achieved only with a clear understanding and real consideration of the sociocultural factor. The call to integrate intercultural knowledge and competence into the heart of education is an imperative born of seeing ourselves as members of a world community, knowing that we share the future with others. The intercultural knowledge and competence rubric suggests a systematic way to measure our capacity to identify our own cultural patterns, compare and contrast them with others, and adapt empathically and flexibly to unfamiliar ways of being. Global media can help students to become familiar with the cultural events, political and economic processes taking place in society, the peculiarities of the mentality and social life, to learn more about traditions, cultural values, social life and realities of modern life. Students of different specialties get more information about their subject matter and expand their knowledge of English.

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1. Introduction

The notions of ‘cultural learning’, ‘cultural studies’, ‘sociocultural competence’, ‘intercultural competence’ and ‘intercultural communication’ are present in policy initiatives on language learning in the Russian Federation, the UK, France, Germany and a number of other European countries, as well as in the USA, Canada and Australia and in documents of international bodies such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Language learners are often described as ‘cultural mediators’, ‘border-crossers’, ‘negotiators of meaning’ or ‘intercultural speakers’. From this new perspective the acquisition of a foreign language is seen as “the acquisition of the cultural practices and beliefs it embodies for particular social groups” (Byram, 1989, p.4), and communication in a foreign language is described as a process that “involves mediating and establishing relationships between one’s own and other cultures” (Byram & Feng, 2004, p. 153).

Recent years have also seen an important shift from the previously common goal of ‘communicative competence’ to that of ‘intercultural communicative competence’, which underlines the need for language learning to develop learners’ cultural sensitivity and their ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives in communicative situations.

Byram emphasizes that intercultural competence is an integral and definitive part of what it means to learn a foreign language: Foreign language learning is centrally concerned with communication in a foreign language. The significance of this is not only the practical question of linguistic competence for communication, central though that is, but also the relationship between the language and the cultural practices and beliefs of a group. The acquisition of a foreign language is the relativisation of what seems to the learners to be the natural language of their own identities, and the realization that these are cultural, and socially constructed (Byram & Feng, 2004).

2. Problem Statement

Sadochin (2008) supposes that

intercultural dialogue is possible if its participants in the process of communication are able to translate their own culture and borrow artifacts of another culture. Intercultural competence becomes the property of an individual or community that allows partners to work together in the process of intercultural communication, create common cultural values, form a single sociocultural space in which representatives of different cultures and ethnic groups can successfully interact. (p. 173)

Professor Ter-Minasova (2000) says that the components of the culture having national-specific color include the following:

- a) traditions, as well as customs and rituals;
- b) household culture which is closely connected with traditions that is why it is often called the traditional household culture;

c) everyday behavior and mimic and pantomimic (kinetic) codes associated with it used by carriers of a certain linguocultural community;

d) "national pictures of the world" reflecting the specifics of perception of the surrounding world, national peculiarities of thinking of representatives of a particular culture;

e) art reflecting the cultural traditions of a particular ethnic group.

Intercultural communication takes into account the peculiarities of the national character of communicants, their specific emotions, and national-specific features of thinking.

Furmanova (1993) writes that "intercultural competence is a set of background knowledge and the ability to adequately apply it in a certain cultural context based on a comparison of two or more cultures" (p. 73).

Narolina (2010) understands intercultural communicative competence as "a psychological new formation of a higher order, the functioning of which makes possible the intercultural communication of a professional-business, sociocultural and personal character" (para. 7).

The term "intercultural communication" represents broad ideas that are difficult to express in just one way. Here are some famous working definitions of this term:

- Intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from two different cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1998).
- Intercultural communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process, in which people from different cultures create shared meanings (Lustig & Koester, 2007)
- Intercultural communication refers to the effects on communication behavior, when different cultures interact together. Hence, one way of viewing intercultural communication is as communication that unfolds in symbolic intercultural spaces (Arasaratnam, 2013).

In Byram's model, the learner not only 'gathers facts' about the foreign culture, but is able to put this information into dialogue with information about his or her own country in similar topical domains. Important curricular objectives for this component of intercultural competence include knowledge of:

(1) social institutions and their impact on daily life; social and class distinctions and their markers; the processes of social interaction;

(2) historical and contemporary relationships between the two countries in question including major events and people; stories about these relationships from both sides and from diverse groups within each country;

(3) the national memories of each country, including icons, symbols, trends, myths, landmarks, artefacts of popular culture, regional distinctions, their markers and their meanings;

(4) the types of misunderstandings that may occur between members of the two countries in question and the origins of these misunderstandings such as culturally-contingent interpretations of psychological constructs like patriotism and democracy or social behavior such as public displays of affection or flying the national flag (Byram & Feng, 2004).

Agar (1994) describes language and culture as essentially inseparable and mutually constructive phenomena and coins the term linguoculture to index the reflexivity between language and culture. In other words, language is shaped by culture and culture, in turn, is shaped by language use: Language, in

all its varieties, in all the ways it appears in everyday life, builds a world of meanings. Culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture . . . whenever you hear the word language or the word culture, you might wonder about the missing half . . . ‘Linguoculture’ is a reminder, I hope, of the necessary connection between its two parts . . . (Narolina, 2010).

Under the new conditions, with the new formulation of the problem of teaching foreign languages, it became obvious that a radical increase in the level of instruction in communication, communication between people of different nationalities can be achieved only with a clear understanding and real consideration of the sociocultural factor.

3. Research Questions

The study tries to answer the following questions:

- how can ‘global flow’ of media be integrated into an English lesson?
- what factors affect the integrating of media into the classroom?
- what type of media is more effective for improving lingo-cultural competence of students?
- which strategies would be most effective for lingo-cultural competence of students?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research aims to investigate the following issues:

- the need and importance of learning and exploring intercultural knowledge and competence;
- an awareness of students’ cultural identities and an appreciation for others’;
- students’ ability to recognize cultural variations in the internet and telecommunications;
- understand how categories of cultural values might underline different behaviors;
- how students can become adaptable in intercultural interactions.

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used to conduct the research:

- Analysing and reinterpreting existing research on the ability to communicate in a foreign language;
- Reviewing multiple pieces of research on culture in an age of globalization;
- Analysing theories and conceptual frameworks concerning the ‘global flow’ of media;
- Mixing or synthesising existing research in order to draw new conclusions.

6. Findings

“In order to compete in the global economy, we believe that every young person should leave higher educational institution with the ability to communicate in more than one language and have an appreciation of other cultures” (Agar, 1994, p. 23). Offering every young person the chance to learn English will help to encourage their mobility, equip the next generation with the skills they need to succeed, and ensure the long-term success of our economy and society.

We believe there is no better place for tomorrow's business leaders to acquire their language skills than in today's classrooms. English teachers try to foster a better understanding of the world among our young people. Their students read authentic text materials, especially newspapers to foreign language lessons. These materials allow students to become familiar with the cultural events, political and economic processes taking place in society, the peculiarities of the mentality and social life. Newspapers and magazine articles provide an opportunity to discuss current social problems and compare development trends of different countries.

Malkova (2002) writes that ethnic information transmitted by the media can carry out a very humane, tolerant mission. It educates people, informs them, entertains them, organizes them for good deeds and performs a number of other useful functions. From this source, people learn a lot of new things about other nations, and this brings up with readers, listeners, viewers interest and respect for them, for their lives and achievements. Positive ethnic information about their own people is also important: it contributes to the formation of ethnic identity, respectful attitude towards their ethnic community, their ethnic or national dignity. In addition, tolerant ethnic information contributes to the formation of mass positive ideas of people in the field of interethnic relations.

The growth of the internet and telecommunications has made it possible to cross borders without leaving a home. Nowadays, we have an access to material and cultural products from all over the world which means that we have the opportunity to experience cultural variety without needing to travel. However, it can be argued that globalization removes the differences between places.

Culture is commonly consumed now via internet platforms. Many people read newspapers online rather than in print, or access the news via social media such as Facebook, Twitter or online blogs. The increased use of smartphones and tablets has led to entertainment companies (such as Netflix) streaming programmes and films via the internet.

The effect of this is that people and places are increasingly 'interconnected' (Hannerz, 1996). His work provides an account of culture in an age of globalization. Hannerz (1996) argues that, in an ever-more interconnected world, national understandings of culture have become insufficient. He explores the implications of boundary-crossings and long-distance cultural flows for established notions of "the local", "community", "nation" and "modernity". "In the most general sense, globalization is a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well. That interconnectedness has a great many aspects.' People can remain connected to news, politics and culture wherever they are and whatever time it is. There is almost instant access to media, cultural products and ideas from all over the world, without people having to leave their homes.

Globalization scholar, Appadurai (1996), calls this the global 'mediascape'. He describes it as a 'transnational landscape' or 'global flow' of different media, and the images and ideas that they carry. The 'global mediascape' refers to the 'global flow' of media – newspapers, television channels, the internet, social media – across national borders. It also refers to the images and the ideas transported by these media. We have instant access to news, films and television programs from all over the world and can communicate with people we have never met via social media. Appadurai (1996) therefore argues that we are increasingly connected by 'global flows' and 'transnational landscapes' which do not stop at national borders.

Different exercises help students to reflect on who they are. For example, they are asked to select at least one of their identities affected by culture and discuss it with other students. They are asked to take a moment to think about what qualities, skills, memberships, relations, and roles define who they are. Start by spontaneously listing as many as possible qualities according to the table 1.

Table 01. List of simple and a more descriptive statements

A simple statement	A more descriptive statement
I am Kalmyk	“I am a father, husband, son, brother, uncle, and a nephew. “
I am Russian	“I am hard-working, organized, dependable, proud and helpful”
I am from Elista	“I am stubborn, a little shy and easily riled
I am a girl	“I am a person who has likes Korean doramas”
I am a sister	“I am a fan of movies, reading, hiking and relaxing with friends
I am a sportsman	
I am not married	
I am a beer drinker	
“I am a student “	

The newspaper is also a source of new vocabulary, cliché, phraseological idioms. In addition, newspaper materials represent the richness of styles of modern English. A newspaper is presented with mentioning some important realities. Students working with the newspaper can expand their scientific and linguistic horizons, acquire skills in searching and processing information, and rational working with text, their interest in the subject increases. The headline of the press should be a guide for students to help work in the information space, so it is important to teach students to pay attention to the heading, decipher the most concise information encoded in it, and refer to the heading while working with text. Online versions of publications are available and can be widely used during English lessons.

This type of activity provides a lot of information used by native speakers. It helps to increase students’ practical proficiency in a foreign language. Reading newspaper materials not only requires knowledge of the realities, culture, way of life of the country of the language being studied, but also becomes a valuable source of this knowledge. Newspaper materials are conveniently organized from a thematic point of view. News, politics, business, sports, education, health, art and culture, computers, weather - not a complete list of newspaper headings filled with various texts. English teachers can pick up the text for any topic of the lesson.

When students have knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks, they can understand the elements important to members of another culture. These elements can relate to the culture’s history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, beliefs, and practices.

At the lessons, students are required to look up the answers to one of the three following topics on a county they would like to visit in the future. In addition to writing the answers as a Word document to these topics, they are asked to provide images from the Internet, links or websites. For example, the first topic is the name of the head of state, perhaps the president, king, queen, etc. Students can look up an image of this person and insert it into their Word document or presentation.

Political systems:

- Name the head of state (president, king, queen, etc.).
- Names of other key government leaders (prime minister, foreign minister, minister of internal affairs, etc. (include images or photos)
- Format and function of the national government and national legislature

Religions and faith traditions:

- Names of leaders of major religions or faith systems (include images or photos)
- Key beliefs or traditions (include images or photos)
- What each religion or faith tradition teaches regarding life, death, and interaction with others

Economy:

- Names of major companies that operate in the country or countries and what they produce (include links to websites)
- Major exports or imports common predictions for how well the economy will perform in the next few years

Sports and exercise:

- Name of the sports leagues and teams located in the city or region you will visit (include images, photos, and websites)
- Colors, emblems, and logos of those sports teams (include images)
- Common forms of exercise among the general population (include photos)

Holidays:

- Name of major holidays and when they take place (include images or photos)
- How do people generally celebrate these holidays? (include images or photos)
- What are the meanings of these holidays?
- Common foods, music, art associated with those holidays (include images and photos)

Music and art:

- Names of major artists and musicians (include images or photos)
- Names of famous artists whose works appear in museums or art galleries (include images or photos)

Younger generation is very interested in the world football and they are eager to read about football clubs, different leagues and famous footballers. However, sport and economy are interconnected. Students like to read about sport events. Future economists are presenting information concerning money and financial performance. They read articles about football which are full of economic terms like profitable leagues, revenue, growth, salary, financial planning, etc. Students are invited to compare the information in the headline to any prior knowledge they might have about the topic in an article Students learning economics look at the financial data in sport articles and receive more information about

interdependence of sport and world economy. As students read these articles and develop their ideas they are encouraged to a respectful discussion.

Law students can trace how a single newspaper describes and reports a catastrophe. It can help students understand how information is conveyed, as well as the importance of evaluating multiple sources of information to construct an understanding of any event. Students learning law read newspaper articles about crimes and disorderly behavior, about student houses which may be targeted by burglars as it often means there are multiple laptops, mobile phones and other electronics available and students may not be as security conscious as adults. Some articles write that students experience crime, mostly theft. Law students learn special terms and they can read articles concerning property, violence, pick-pocketing, thieves, fans clash and so on.

7. Conclusion

In connection with the orientation of the national education system towards entering the world educational space, there is a tendency to increase attention to the issues of language education, rethinking the goals, content, principles, means and methods of teaching a foreign language. The search for new models and technologies of education that contribute to the most complete identification and realization of the socially developing potential of the “foreign language” discipline.

English teachers try to improve students’ intercultural knowledge and competence. As students develop cultural self-awareness they not only can articulate their own cultural identity, rules, and biases, but they also begin to move from strongly preferring only their own cultural view to becoming more comfortable with new cultural perspectives. Cultural self-awareness leads them to progress from looking for sameness to seeking complexity based on cultural differences.

It is feasible that recent graduates who have a solid command of a foreign language could be more attractive to potential employers. Language skills allow them to communicate with individuals in their target language and enable them to read a wider variety of publications, which benefits their work. Pinskaya (2015) writes that “Internet communication is becoming one of the serious sociocultural factors shaping the culture of students' professional self-realization, acquiring a leading role in the field of student subculture today” (p. 102).

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