Cross-Cultural Context Of English Language Teaching

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Abstract. In this article we will discuss the intercultural approach, present relevant ideas as well as resources for English language teachers who want to expand the multicultural consciousness of their learners. The development of intercultural competence is perceived as one of the key or fundamental goals of modern education, as studies indicate that teachers face many difficulties in achieving the goal of developing intercultural competence of their learners.Current trends of teaching foreign languages from several points of view are analyzed in the article. From a theoretical point of view, the opinions and works of scholars in the field of language teaching have been used to define and describe what is meant by intercultural competence and intercultural approach. It was emphasized that culture plays an important role in language teaching and that it is necessary to prepare students for cross-cultural communication, since it will take place both inside and outside the country. Defining culture, cross-cultural approach, and cross-cultural competence is difficult because of the multiple academic domains and goals of these domains that are involved in the academic discourse about these concepts.

INTRODUCTION

It is now widely accepted that teaching and learning English cannot be reduced to directly teaching language skills such as phonology, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. Modern models of communicative competence show that language learning is much more than that, and they include a vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness. [2, p. 15] In other words, in order to learn a foreign language well, one usually needs to know something about the culture of the speakers of that language. Communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often leads to humorous incidents or, even worse, is a source of serious misunderstandings and incomprehension. According to Kramsch, culture "is always in the background, from the early period of learning, ready to unsettle good language learners when they least expect it, making obvious the limitations of their hardly won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them"[15, p. 23].

However, when writing or speaking about the cross-cultural context in foreign language teaching, theorists and practitioners are often limited to the specific culture of the target language. In the context of English as a foreign (second) language, where students live and are immersed in the culture of native English speakers, this may be a satisfactory approach. In the classroom, students usually speak the same language, and they learn English while living in their own country. [11, p. 14] They have limited access to the target culture and, consequently, limited ability to become culturally competent. It is important to note that the purpose of learning English is not only to communicate with native English speakers, but also with non-native English speakers.

All over the world, English is recognized as the universal language of cultural, business and scientific education communications. Global integration and innovation processes affect various areas of the world economy. This factor, at the same time, highlights the relevance and importance of vocational education of English in a non-linguistic university [14, p. 1080].

MATERIALS

By learning English, students have the opportunity to become users of international, or rather cross-cultural communication – thus, the English language becomes a tool for use in interacting with people from all over the world, where

communication in this language takes place in areas such as science, technology, business, art, entertainment and tourism.

Obviously, in order to function successfully in a culturally diverse environment, our students are to develop cross-cultural communication competence [1, p. 60].

Consequently, the professional development of an English teacher in the field of intercultural competence has a positive impact on the learning outcomes of students, especially in the cognitive component of intercultural competence.

The true complexity of what it means to master a language is revealed in a useful list of student competencies prepared by the Council of Europe [5]. In addition to grammatical competence, a culturally competent student must possess sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and cross-cultural awareness. As it is seen, culture is a very broad concept, so to get acquainted with specific culture means to gain extensive knowledge.It is useful to distinguish between the so-called culture of the big C and the culture of the small C. Most of this culture is usually easy to learn, since it represents actual knowledge of the visual arts, such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theater and cinema. On the other hand, small culture includes a wide range of aspects, many of which are interrelated, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, norms and values, social relations, customs, holidays, rituals, rules of politeness, patterns of interaction and organization of discourse, rational use of time in communication, and the use of physical space and body language.Obviously, language is also part of what we call culture, and it also reflects and interprets culture. Some of the minor cultural aspects can be directly observed, and are therefore easy to understand and study (for example, festivals and rituals). However, many dimensions of this culture are realities. This includes non-cultural aspects that, having been instilled in us from birth, are deeply internalized and subconscious, and are often noticed only in contrast to another culture. It is these intangible cultural aspects that have a huge impact on the way people live.

METHODS

Thinking and their linguistic / non-linguistic behavior, and this, importantly, determines the expectations and interpretations of other people's linguistic/non-linguistic behavior. A person who is faced with an unfamiliar culture lacks knowledge about such behavior, which can lead to funny situations and even conflicts caused by misunderstandings. This is because these aspects of the culture are unspoken rules created by the community. Since these cultural rules are full of meaning and "allow people to anticipate events, they often acquire a moral rigidity and righteousness that generates stereotypes and even prejudices"[15, p. 34].

Let's take a look at a few examples of failed cross-cultural encounters. This lack of understanding of verbal or nonverbal messages often leads to a distorted picture of the other society and its culture. A German in the United States who is offered food and politely refused may be unpleasantly surprised that s/he is not given anything to eat, and may even think that Americans are stingy with food. The American host will not understand that refusing to eat is a sign of modesty, and the person offering the food must insist. A German dining with a Taiwanese family may feel very upset if everyone at the table starts burping, not realizing that this is a form of compliment to the chef. On the other hand, a Taiwanese family is likely to perceive an Englishman's behavior (lack of burping) as impolite. The Briton might have been amused if the Pole had heard the conventional greeting *"What's up?"*–s/he began to complain about his/her health, and the Pole, on the contrary, wondered why his/her interlocutor was so amused [10].

There are countless examples of such cross-cultural encounters, and they clearly show that knowledge of the small culture of a given community is not always of great importance for successful cross-cultural communication. Even if the participants in the situations described above were fluent in English and well-informed about cultural facts, such as famous works of art and religious holidays, this knowledge would do little to avoid misunderstandings.

Cross-cultural approach-used, in many ways, in order for students learning English to become successful cross-cultural communicators, it is necessary to provide them with thorough and systematic cross-cultural training, and not only on the culture of the main English-speaking countries. Students who learn or are proficient in English will benefit from having a solid knowledge of various world cultures, and they should also develop the ability to compare their native culture with other cultures, critically evaluate and interpret the results of such comparisons, and successfully apply this knowledge in both verbal and nonverbal communication, for both transactional and interactive purposes. Since "culture in language learning is not a consumable fifth skill, so to speak, tied to learning to speak, listen, read, and write", it is extremely important that English lessons consider cultures, and not just selected cultural aspects[7, p. 17].

RESULTS

The success of international communication is a fundamental reason for the comprehensive use of an intercultural approach in teaching English. However, there is another good reason. In many countries, there is still a great deal of intolerance and prejudice towards other nations and cultures. Intensive intercultural education is a good way to develop the senses of tolerance, acceptance, understanding and respect. In some settings, classrooms or classes consist of

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students with different cultural backgrounds; in other classes, classes are culturally homogeneous. In the first case, learning about different cultures and developing cross-cultural awareness are often not new issues, and in multicultural classes, students learn about each other's cultures through various activities, not necessarily in English lessons.

On the other hand, classes of students in culturally homogeneous conditions do not represent an urgent need to increase cross-cultural awareness, so multicultural education is not included in school curricula. In any case, a cultural setting in which the teacher should start with the students' own cultural background and the cultures with which the students have direct contact, and then expand from that point on until all the world's cultures are covered. These activities were used with students of intermediate level of English language proficiency. Teachers who are less experienced and/or younger may need to make appropriate adjustments before applying these ideas. For example, teachers can (1) teach parts of the classes in the students' native language, (2) use introductory classes that pre-teach the appropriate vocabulary or structures and introduce key concepts, (3) simplify texts or design classes so that students can cope with more complex texts, and (4) adapt classes according to the stage of students' cognitive development. It is essential that cross-cultural training begins as early as possible; we should not delay it until our students have reached an advanced level of language proficiency and/or are older. Other possible options for adaptation will depend on the characteristics of the students, such as willingness to cooperate with peers and willingness to take independent actions.

Another priority is the exchange of teachers or students. Students participating in the exchange programs should be appropriately trained so that they can explore certain cultural aspects by talking to and observing people. When they return home, they must report to the others what they have found out. Today email exchange is the technology that allows students from different cultures to "meet" in virtual reality. As described by Ho, email exchanges between two classes from different countries are becoming a popular alternative to traditional face-to-face exchanges [12]. Pairs of students from different parts of the world can also work in tandem using email or chat programs. In the case of technological contacts, as well as in the case of traditional exchanges, the teacher should guide students on the right ways to explore other cultures. Appropriate activities should also be designed so that students can share new information with the rest of the class.

Next important area is project work, since, from a methodological point of view, it serves as a useful technique that can be successfully used in an intercultural approach. Groups of students can reveal various facts about a given culture when working on a project and preparing a presentation. First, students find

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information about a given culture using various sources (the Internet, newspapers and magazines, television, people they know or their "key friends"). The next step is the synthesis of the collected information and, very often, some artistic preparation. The results of students' work should be presented to others, and this can be the entire class or even the entire school [13, p. 165].

Project work is very well suited to the development of students' cross-cultural knowledge, as it is usually content-oriented. In addition, it has many other advantages. It develops students' language skills, problem-solving skills, creativity, imagination, research skills, and teamwork skills. Much attention is paid to the individualization and development of students' interests.

The presentation of the students' work at the end of the project is usually a very important event for them, which contributes to a stable motivation during the work on the project. Asthe responsibility and choice are theirs, each project is a unique, personal and memorable experience for students. In addition, project works can allow them to learn independently. When assigning projects, good language teachers help their students develop the ability to learn about world cultures without supervision. Effective projects and learning activities generally teach students where to look for information, how to derive cultural information encoded in written or spoken text, how to make comparisons between different cultures, and how to use new knowledge. Students should be able to make their own choices and work independently from the teacher, individually or in collaboration with peers.

Teachers who want to implement an intercultural approach in teaching English in the classroom should consider possible problems and ways to solve them. A professionally competent English teacher begins the course by conducting a needs analysis to be able to teach according to the students' language needs and goals, current level of knowledge, learning preferences, and especially what they find interesting and engaging. It is very possible that not all students will be interested in learning foreign cultures from the very beginning [11]. The task of the teacher is to convince his/her learners that intercultural learning is actually an indispensable element of modern education. The teacher can use stories of real-life encounters where a lack of cross-cultural awareness has led to funny, awkward, or even dangerous situations. It goes without saying that cross-cultural classes should be interesting for students and take place in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Students should be active participants in the class, making choices and making decisions. Interested, engaged, responsible students are motivated students. Encouraging appropriate attitudes – it is vital that students do not treat information about world cultures as a curiosity or, even worse, make fun of it.The teacher should ensure that students make serious attempts to learn and understand other cultures (even if they may disagree with some aspects of these cultures). Both the

teacher and the students should fully understand that cross-cultural knowledge is essential for successful communication around the world.

Stereotypical attitudes and prejudices will hinder the development of cross-cultural competence of students. The teacher should help students understand that there can be different sets of behaviors, beliefs, and values, and the fact that we only represent the one we were "born in" is pure coincidence. As Kramsch writes "breaking down stereotypes isn't just about realizing that people aren't what they thought they were, or that deep down, we're all the same in the depth of our souls. It's an understanding that we are irreducibly unique and different, and that I could be you, you could be me, given different circumstances".[15, p. 52]

Obviously, there are aspects of some cultures that students should not accept or adopt, such as the inequality between men and women or the inhumane treatment towards the animals. The task of the teacher is not to "convert" students to other cultures; the role of the teacher of English as a foreign language is to help students learn and understand different cultures, because this knowledge and understanding is necessary for successful intercultural communication.

The process of forming intercultural competence in school or high educational institution should include three necessary components: the formation of a sufficient stock of background knowledge about the national culture of the country of the target language, the formation of an adequate and friendly perception of a foreign language and its realities, and, finally, practical training in intercultural communication.

Modernization of the education system in the Republic of Uzbekistan leads to the fact that the modern goal of teaching a foreign language and culture is now not the assimilation of a certain system of knowledge, skills and abilities, but preparation for real intercultural communication. The term "intercultural communication" is quite widespread in modern methodological science, and its interpretation is given very clearly. This term defines a set of specific processes of interaction between communication partners belonging to different linguistic and ethno-cultural communities.

Within the framework of teaching intercultural communication, the content of the cultural component is of great importance. The basis of such training is culture as a way of life, especially the customs and beliefs of a certain group of people at a certain time. In this regard, the process of teaching intercultural communication should be based on the concept of a dialogue of cultures. The formation of intercultural competence should be considered in connection with the development of the student's personality, his/her ability and willingness to participate in the dialogue of cultures based on the principles of cooperation, mutual respect, tolerance for cultural differences and overcoming cultural barriers. In the process

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of exposure to foreign culture in the context of dialogue of cultures the students rely on cognitive tools of their culture, taken for realization of funds of foreign culture, new knowledge about foreign culture, formed in the process of learning, and new knowledge about their culture, created with the cognition of a foreign culture.

DISCUSSION

Culture has always been a part of teaching foreign languages. In fact, it was only for a very short period of time after World War II that there was a widespread perception among foreign language researchers that the cultural aspects or cross-cultural context of a foreign language being studied should not be covered in a language class. However, for most of the time that modern foreign languages were taught, the question of whether culture should be part of language teaching was debated by many theorists, and many perspectives and approaches influenced the general argument. There are two main reasons why the role of culture often changes in foreign language teaching. The discussion was influenced by changes in the overall goals of foreign language teaching at the relevant time, which were strongly shaped by the language policy goals of education and language teaching. In addition, changes in the understanding of culture and its definition have had an impact on how it is taught in foreign language education process.

It is in this way the history of language teaching has influenced what is understood by the modern intercultural approach to teaching [3, p.18].

Recently, there have been developing two approaches to teaching English, taking into account the cross-cultural approach. An intercultural approach is an approach prescribed by national curricula, national standards and the Pan-European Language Standards System (CEF). Firstly, however, it is necessary to provide some information about another aspect that has a huge impact on how the cultural component is taught in language classes today: the understanding of culture itself [18, p. 29].

The definition of culture has always been difficult for scientists, and there is still no consensus on this definition. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, culture is relevant to many scientific and academic disciplines. Therefore, many points of view and theories can be implemented in its definition. Secondly, culture is a dynamic construct that is constantly changing. Therefore, thedefinitioncanonlycoveritsmaincontours.

Thus, many definitions was proposed, and for a long time culture was understood as a product of the country, such as music, architecture, literature, painting, clothing, etc. This understanding of culture is often referred to as high culture or culture with a capital C. However, in recent decades, the definition of culture as something static and product-oriented was considered insufficient. It

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does not consider all members of the nation, but only those who belong to a particular social group. It doesn't also take into account people's behavior, attitudes, or values. Cultural artifacts are only those parts of a culture that are obvious and observable.

This definition has several implications for the role of culture in the classroom where English is taught. First of all, the concept of national cultures is no longer sufficient. The national approach to culture ignores the multicultural nature of societies and the culture of subgroups within societies, such as youth culture [16, p.11]. Consequently, topics such as race, class, age, and gender are relevant for English language classes. Secondly, if culture is the way of life, then it can no longer be considered as a static concept. People's lives are changing, and although the past of a nation or group always plays a role in modern life, communicating with a person in the 50-s of the last century will be different from communicating with a person in the 21st century.

So, culture today is understood as a heterogeneous, multi-layered and dynamic structure. Spencer-Oateyrecognizes these features of culture as "culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people and that influence (but not determine) the behavior of each group member and his/her interpretation of the 'meaning' of the behavior of other people"[20, c.45].

This definition gives an idea of the task that teachers face, both in English education and for other foreign languages being studied. If culture influences how people in the target group of native speakers think, act, feel, and experience others, the same applies to students in a language class. Thus, they see and perceive people's behavior through their own cultural frame of reference. Very often, this perception is transmitted through language. Culture is explained through language, and it is explained depending on the cultural component [15, p. 23].

Linguists agree on the importance of culture in English language classes, and it has become one of the main areas of research in the study and teaching foreign languages. This is also justified by political and social conditions. Contact between cultures is enhanced through direct and indirect exchanges, product transfers, and social networks. Different cultures live together, work together, and go to school together. In other words, globalization has found its place in schools and universities, and one of the tasks of education, including language education, is to prepare students for this globalization. The cross-cultural approach to language learning provides one look at how this can be achieved.

Like culture, it is difficult to define what is meant by an intercultural approach and its desired outcome. This is partly due to the fact that a number of academic

fields recognize the importance of cross-cultural competence, and it is relevant not only in the study and teaching of foreign languages.

It should be noted that the perspectives and contributions of such fields as business and marketing, social studies, linguistics, and linguoculturology have influenced what is now understood as cross-cultural competence. This illustrates the importance of cross-cultural competence in our world and shows that it is not only a task that needs to be mastered in a foreign language lesson, in our case English. On the other hand, contributions from several academic fields have also generated a lot of information and opinions on this concept, making it difficult to define. However, we agree with Deardorff's view that "helping students acquire cross-cultural competence implies that we know what the concept is". [6, p. 42]. Foreign language teachers who have a general understanding of what they are teaching will be better able to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Cross-cultural communication aims to prepare students to become tourists, to travel to English-speaking countries from time to time and spend a few weeks on vacation there. Thus, the purpose of cross-cultural communication classes is to familiarize students with the traditions and customs of another country and provide opportunities to communicate with native speakers. Communicative competence, that is, skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, are the main focus in lessons that are seasoned with cultural content. According to the postulates of intercultural communication, knowledge about the target culture is necessary for successful communication. This includes having a practical knowledge of the arts, as well as an understanding of the political and educational system, and also the history and geography of the target countries [21, p.33]. Since culture is considered only as declarative knowledge, the methods used are very often traditional.

Therefore, it is assumed that through the study and analysis of cultural products, students will automatically learn about the culture of the target countries. Consequently, because of the focus on declarative knowledge alone, students often know more about the culture of the target countries than the actual residents. However, this approach ignores the critical phase of reflection and sensitization. [21, p.18] Students can learn a lot about culture, they can even come close to achieving almost native communicative competence, but all this will not help them to negotiate when they are faced with cross-cultural misunderstandings.

The most important thing is that the language communication competence and the native speaker model are not enough to prepare students for successful communication with native speakers. A native speaker's cultural knowledge is not limited to background knowledge. And even if it would be realistic that students can acquire the communicative competence of native speakers, this does not guarantee that communication will be successful. Misunderstandings and critical

incidents, or so-called culture shock, are not just caused by a lack of language skills. Very often they are initiated by cultural differences [17, c.545]. This basic assumption is the basis of an intercultural approach to language learning. Instead of focusing solely on communicative competence, the cross-cultural approach aims to develop cross-cultural competence.

The intercultural approach recognizes the importance of both communicative and intercultural competence for effective and successful communication. [19, p. 192] Thus, the intercultural approach also pays special attention to the socio-cultural aspects of language. The emphasis is no longer only on what is said, but also on how it is said. Skills such as reaction, analysis, and "interpreting the world and knowing how to behave" are considered key elements of successful cross-cultural communication. [9, p. 22]

In addition, a typical carrier of the cross-cultural approach is the mediator of cultures, that is, someone who has the necessary language skills for communication. And in addition to that, someone who is able to negotiate, analyze, interpret, and reflect the sociocultural aspects of cross-cultural communication and provide cross-cultural understanding. [10, p.13]

The results of the study also showed that teachers of foreign languages in general and English in particular, will find it difficult to find ready-to-learn tips and materials for introducing an intercultural approach to the language audience. It seems that so far the focus of research and empirical work has been on the definition of cross-cultural competence or the assessment of cross-cultural competence, but not on effective resources or methods in the classroom [6, p.38].

It should be noted that, rather than focusing research on the definition of cross-cultural competence, the results of empirical research here require a research that helps to develop skilled and effective methods that can be used in the classroom, especially given that textbooks appear to be equipped in a limited way. This can only be achieved if the theory is accepted in the classroom and if scientists and teachers work together and communicate in order to assess trends.

Thus, how cross-cultural competence develops and what methods are most useful for developing the necessary skills can only be learned in foreign language classes.In addition to the willingness to accept a foreign culture as equal to their own, students should develop a positive attitude to the realities of the language being studied, which will allow them, with some practice, to carry out effective communication with representatives of other cultures.

CONCLUSION

The modern goal of learning a foreign language is a "way out" on the formation of student's personality, his/her willingness, abilities and personal qualities that enable him/her to carry out various types of speech activity in terms

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of social interaction with representatives of other linguo-ethno-socium and culture of another linguistic world image. The integrative nature of this goal is manifested in the interrelation of its three aspects: pragmatic, cognitive, and pedagogical.

The cross-cultural approach is, certainly,realized easiest of all with the help of students, as they will clearly see its usefulness, and will therefore be motivated to learn. Teenagers will perceive the purposefulness of cross-cultural education less vividly, and for children it will be too abstract to comprehend. Teaching these younger age groups is certainly more challenging for English language teachers. On the other hand, cross-cultural lessons can easily be made student-centered, interesting, and fun, and for this reason they can be successful for all age groups.

Thus, the implementation of the cross-cultural approach is a difficult and responsible task for a language teacher, who must have at least some cross-cultural knowledge and very often preserve it, developing it together with his/her students. It should not be overlooked that cross-cultural education leads to a certain degree to the adoption of values, beliefs and behaviors that may conflict with one's own. "A language teacher, by guiding students to new perspectives and new identities, gets involved with the foundations of human identity" [8, p. 201]. Therefore, an English teacher, in our opinion, should implement an intercultural approach tactfully, skillfully and consciously. Systematic cross-cultural education is a prerequisite for the education of a new generation of young people who will not only tolerate, but also understand, accept and respect people from different world cultures, will successfully communicate with them and learn from them through the process of communication.

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