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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: THE FIFTH SKILL IN LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

The article provides the results of studying cultural approach in foreign language teaching/learning process. Culture is believed to be an essential component of language knowledge. Understanding foreign and native culture is regarded as «the fifth competence» in language mastery together with listening, reading, speaking and writing. The development of cultural approach in the history of foreign language classroom is traced. The skills in using acquired cultural knowledge for intercultural communication are analyzed.

Key words: cultural knowledge, approach, competence, intercultural, skills, communication.

Over the past several decades, increasing attention has been paid to the place of culture in language classrooms. Beyond any doubt, culture is an essential part of foreign language learning process. Many research works focused on cultural learning «as an instructional objective equally as important as communication» [10, p.4].

The problem of cultural approach in the process of foreign language teaching/learning has been studied by linguists [3; 5; 7], psychologists [1], sociologists [10; 11].

The aim of the given article is to overview the evolution of cultural approach in the world practice of foreign language classes and to investigate the key components of the linguocultural competence. In keeping with the convention within the field of Foreign Language Education of referring to language abilities as separate skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), culture is often regarded as the «fifth skill» of language mastery. What do we mean by it? In general, culture as «the fifth skill» emphasizes the learner's ability to perceive, to understand, and ultimately, to accept cultural relativity.

Ivan Ohienko found learning foreign languages very useful. In his work «Ukrainian Culture. Short History of Ukrainian People Cultural Life» analyzing Ukrainian culture retrospectively he claims that the Ukrainians had been known as good experts in foreign languages [2, p.59] that's why they could be seen long ago working as interpreters and in embassies where they translated from foreign languages. Ivan Ohienko worked out the system of principles upon which language education must be based. On the level with scientism, historicism, awareness, emotionality he ranked Europeism, cultural congruity, consideration of regional, local and family language environment.

The true complexity of what it means to know a language is revealed in the useful list of learner competencies produced by the Council of Europe [8]. In addition to grammatical competence, a culturally competent learner must possess sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness.

Traditionally three interwoven components are distinguished in foreign language teaching/learning: language use, awareness of the nature of language, and understanding of foreign and native culture [4, p.7]. Each of these is interdependent on the other two. What is important for all the learners is that they should understand possible differences between their own culture and the others and that they should develop their attitudes and acquire the means to cope with such differences.

The cultural approach to foreign language teaching/learning underwent four stages in its development: *the foreign-cultural approach*, losing ground since the

1980s; *the intercultural approach*, which has replaced the foreign-cultural approach, and is the dominant one today; *the multicultural approach*, which has made its appearance since the 1980 s, but is still in a marginal position; *the trans-cultural approach*, just beginning to appear as a result of cultural integration [12]. It should be noted that these approaches are to be understood as ideal-typical. In the actual course of teaching/learning they may coexist.

The foreign-cultural approach is the first one which appeared among all other cultural approaches and that is why it is rather imperfect and far from ideal. It is based on the concept of the single culture, associated with a specific people, a specific language, and normally with a specific territory. This approach focuses on the culture of the country where the language is spoken (target country), and does not deal with the learner's own country, or other countries [12, p.243-244]. The conception of the target country in question may include geographic, social or sub-cultural variation, but it is still said to be variation within one culture: English culture, German culture, French culture etc.

The foreign-cultural approach has been the dominant paradigm within foreign language teaching from the last century until the 1980s. Today it is being strongly called into question in the pedagogical debate, mainly because it rests upon a concept of culture that does not include relationships between countries.

The intercultural approach is based on a concept of culture that takes its point of departure in the fact that different cultures are structurally related to each other. As in the foreign-cultural approach, the primary focus of the intercultural approach is on the target country, but the intercultural approach also deals with the learners' own country, and with relations between the target country and the learners' own country, and possibly with other countries.

The teaching typically stresses the importance of factors of national identity. It may include comparisons between the target countries and the learner's country, thereby inviting the latter to develop a reflective attitude to the culture and civilization of their own country. Here too, the target language is taught as if it were a first language for the learners in question, but the aim is to develop an intercultural and communicative competence, a competence that enables the learner to function as a mediator between the two cultures.

Since the 1980 s, language teaching has become increasingly influenced by the intercultural perspective. The pure intercultural approach rests upon a concept of culture that presupposes an understanding of each of the cultures as a homogeneous entity – though geographically and socially varied – interacting with the others. But this approach also has a disadvantage: it is blind to the actual multicultural (and multilingual) character of almost all existing countries or states.

The multicultural approach rests upon a concept of culture that reflects the fact that several cultures may coexist within the boundaries of one and the same society or state. It also deals with the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the learners' own country, and with the relations between the target countries and the learners' own, and other countries, including migratory relations. It may include comparisons between the target countries and the learners' own, thereby inviting learners to develop a reflective attitude to the cultures of their own country.

Several factors are contributing to the further development of this approach. Firstly, there is the growing importance of the post-colonial countries as the subject matter for the teaching. Secondly, multicultural perspective may become more pronounced with the increase in the number of multicultural classes. Thirdly, an important factor in the development of the multicultural approach is the increase in learners' exchanges.

The trans-cultural approach takes as its point of departure the interwoven character of cultures as a common condition for the whole world: cultures penetrate

each other in changing combinations by virtue of extensive migration and tourism, world wide communication systems for mass and private communication, economic interdependence, and the globalization for the production of goods.

The trans-cultural approach focuses on the life of individuals and groups in contexts characterized by more or less cultural and linguistic complexity: television channels, the city streets, the multicultural classroom, the supermarket – situations where the target language is used, but in such a way that learners also become aware of other languages being used (English in Germany, French in Britain, etc.). The teaching deals not only with the traditional target countries, but also with other countries, areas or cultural contexts, if this may contribute to language learning.

But in spite of the fact that the trans-cultural approach is very perspective, it is still not so widely used in the world (in general) and in our country (in particular) as the intercultural approach, because it needs a lot of extra means to be effective. The foreign-cultural approach is almost forgotten today and the multicultural approach has quite a big number of places, which are not worked out yet, and that is why practical use of this approach is limited and is done mainly with the experimental purposes.

Understanding of content of the cultural approach has changed dramatically from the times when it was firstly mentioned in different scientific magazines and when it was firstly used at schools till nowadays. Its content broadened greatly and as a result of this broadening appears one substantial question: what are the bounds of content of the cultural approach, i.e. which «cultural information/facts» we should include into it and which not.

Thus, the cultural approach includes the following stages:

- KNOW WHAT: what individuals believe to be true: their political and religious philosophies, their «theories» of disease, education, physics, child bearing, hunting, history, geography, etc. (relative permanent background knowledge);
- KNOW OF: current events and preoccupations: what is going on in the society in question (relatively ephemeral background knowledge);
- KNOW HOW: skills and competencies: how to act, how to behave appropriately (how to use the telephone, dance, choose a spouse) and how to speak (how to «thank, greet, tell a story, address a superior...»), i.e. communicative competence.

Sociolinguistic competence is considered to be an aspect of cultural approach and concerns rules of style, directness, appropriateness and register, and socio-pragmatic rules and conventions covering turn-taking and politeness conventions. It consists of linguistic and non-linguistic components [4, p.8].

Linguistic component comprises:

- 1) acquisition and proper usage of non-equivalent (e.g. Miss, Mister, mass media, tower, sandwich) and background (e.g. church, tea, town etc.) lexis;
- 2) awareness of the socio-cultural conventions governing the use of the language functions (e.g. socializing and those concerning thanking and apologizing, making requests, accepting and declining, opening and closing conversation etc.).

Non-linguistic component includes the following wide categories of information about the foreign society, expressed implicitly and explicitly:

- 1) the spheres of activity and consciousness of the people (subjects of conversations, norms and values);
- 2) verbal and non-verbal interaction (body language, nature of social relationships, genre and generation roles);
- 3) explicit information about English speaking countries (historical, geographical, contemporary, social, etc.).

Socio-cultural knowledge is considered to be a part of general competence (knowledge of the world) and thus inseparable from communicative language competence.

The next component is *skills*. This component is considered to deal with the ability of learners to use the acquired cultural knowledge appropriately in different communication situations. They may be *intercultural* and *practical* [4, p.9].

Intercultural skills include:

- 1) the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- 2) cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;
- 3) capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations.

Practical skills include:

- 1) social skills: the ability to act in accordance with the types of conventions and to perform the appropriate routines;
- 2) living skills: the ability to carry out effectively the routine actions required for daily life (dressing, walking, cooking, eating, etc.);
- 3) vocational and professional skills: the ability to perform specialized actions (mental and physical) required to carry out the duties of (self-) employment;
- 4) leisure skills: the ability to carry out effectively the actions required for leisure activities (e.g. arts, crafts, sports, hobbies etc.).

Besides intercultural and practical skills there is also a group of skills suggested by Kerry O'Sullivan [11]. These skills include components both of intercultural and practical skills. They are as follows:

Externalization skills: being able to explain a cultural «position». If learner finds this impossibly difficult then intercultural awareness may be difficult for him. He may nevertheless still be able to develop a considerable degree of skills in intercultural communication. If learner finds that he is able, to some extent, at least, to see the world in a different way, or to «be» someone else, then a very considerable degree of intercultural skill is within his reach. Also, if he finds himself saying, «Well, I don't really know. I wonder what/why...», this is great. He is in X-mode, and on his way to better intercultural communication [11, p.103].

Analytical skills: finding out what's going on. A prerequisite for developing learner's analytic skills is that he has externalization skills. Here the aim is to spot the «problem» (or potential problem) in communication situations, and analyze the possible source of those problems.

Monitoring skills: keeping an eye on how things are going. A prerequisite for developing monitoring skills is that learner has externalization skills and analytical skills. This should not, however, be taken to imply that learners need to monitor every utterance they produce to receive, every gesture they emit or see, every value they encode or decode. That is impossible and unnecessary. Communication, even within one culture, is a lot of messier than people tend to think it is. Perhaps influenced by reading plays and novels and seeing dialogues on film, people may believe that communication is clean and liner, whereas transcripts of actual communication show a far more disjoint structure full of slips, overlaps and fragments. Learners monitoring of communication should generally not be at the level of word or the sentence, but rather at a «higher» level. For example: to use a computer analogy we need to subject communication to an occasional «page-view» – where we can

see the overall shape of the text, but not the individual words. If we were to subject every word as it is added to a page view, we would never produce any texts. So the outcome of it is: never try to analyze every word or expression, stand «outside» your communication and try to see how it is going [11, p.116].

Communication skills: avoiding problems and repairing problems. A prerequisite for developing communication skills is that learner has externalization skills, analytical skills and monitoring skills. Here the main aim of learners is to avoid miscommunication (if possible) and correct miscommunication (if possible and if necessary).

Anxiety management skills: resolving the emotional aspects. A prerequisite for developing anxiety management skills is that learner has externalization skills, analytical skills, monitoring skills and communication skills.

Interpersonal communications, even within one tribe, can be accompanied by anxiety. When communicators are also dealing with the complexities of cultural differences, this anxiety can be even greater, especially when it involves a long-term sojourn into another culture. It has been suggested that the severity of stress levels depends on a range of factors, including previous experience, «cultural distance» (how different is the new culture), and individual personality differences. On the first contact, this anxiety is called «culture shock», which can be defined as the confusion resulting from well-established habits no longer having their expected consequences. Research has shown that culture shock can lead to quite serious physical and psychological illness and can be quite prolonged [11, p.129]. To avoid the culture shock or to relieve it the person should do the following tasks: externalize, and recognize the existence of intercultural anxiety; monitor its development; analyze its sources; (where possible) communicate your anxiety and discomfort, and declare your difficulty and uncertainty in communication; investigate the target culture(s) to establish greater knowledge; allow time and experience to help.

Tactical skills: knowing when to, and when not to. Developing skills (such as analytical skills and communication skills) is one thing. Applying these skills at appropriate times and in appropriate ways is quite another – and is a matter of «tactics».

The decision-making can apply at both the micro level (for example, at the level of the individual utterance in an exchange) and at the macro (for example, in making decisions about what aspects of a culture to investigate). These are tactical decisions, which all people have to make in their own way.

More broadly, all people need to have a tactical understanding that the development of skill in intercultural communication is a process, and one that never really ceases. There is not finite set of skills, strategies, awareness, or knowledge that can be learned and then «arrived» as a perfectly competent intercultural communicator. As with any life skill, people can only move forward slowly, setting their individual agendas. It should be taken into account that successful intercultural communication lies in choosing the critical moments to make adjustments that are necessary and possible.

Investigative skills: A prerequisite for developing investigative skills is that learner has externalization skills and communication skills. The cultural variability always potentially exists and is worthy of investigation. People are surrounded by rich sources of information about any particular culture (as long, of course, as they select the appropriate time and place for such «research» and choose someone with whom they have enough language in common to pursue the research). They can read books about the history and culture of the target tribe, newspapers and novels, if these are accessible. Watching television and films from the target culture can also provide useful data. But sometimes these «sources» are not reliable because they «prescribe» to learner what people in that culture feel they should do – rather than what they actually do.

Ideally, learner needs to have a combination of all of the above, checking one source against another. Only with this kind of cross-checking learner can really begin to build up an accurate picture of a culture that will result in successful formation of intercultural communicative competence.

The study has shown that language learning should be inseparable from a deeper understanding of target cultural knowledge. Using the existing experience of cultural approach can expand teaching opportunities and offer new perspectives for the learners through which they can build their language and culture knowledge.

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У статті представлені результати дослідження культурологічного підходу в процесі вивчення іноземних мов. Культура вважається невід'ємним компонентом володіння мовою. Розуміння іноземної і рідної культури розглядається як «п'ята компетенція» у володінні мовою поряд із навичками аудіювання, читання, говоріння та письма. Прослідковано розвиток культурологічного підходу в історії навчання іноземних мов. Проаналізовано навички використання набутих культурних знань у процесі міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: знання культури, підхід, компетенція, міжкультурний, навички, спілкування.

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