

FORMATION OF STUDENTS' SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE DURING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

ФОРМУВАННЯ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ ПІД ЧАС ВИВЧЕННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

The article discusses the problem of formation of sociocultural competence of students studying in non-language universities, when they study a foreign language in a professional direction. The urgency of the problem was emphasized since these days a foreign language has become a means of intercultural communication. The publications of foreign and domestic authors who investigated the mentioned problem are analysed. The best advice from professionals to solve this problem is used. The elements of sociocultural content of a foreign language learning have been formulated and the definition of background knowledge necessary for the development of sociocultural competence is presented. A sample of the test which was offered to students at the initial stage of studying a foreign language in a professional direction to determine their level of sociocultural knowledge is presented. The test results showed that the level was low. In the process of further study of a foreign language in a non-language university, the need to introduce students not only to the language and culture of the UK and the USA, but also to European culture and European cultural diversity was emphasized. Taking into account Ukraine's aspirations for entering the European Union, special attention is paid to the desire to balance the interests of representatives of different countries and peoples of Europe, to conduct joint actions aimed at solving environmental, economic, social and political problems. For practical mastery of sociocultural communication skills, role-playing games were used that simulated situations of oral and written communication with native speakers, as well as they formed communicative behaviour patterns in different life situations in foreign countries. At the final stage of studying a foreign language in a professional direction, the test was carried out to determine the level of sociocultural knowledge acquired by students in the process of studying. The test results showed that the level of their sociocultural competence increased significantly compared to that which was at the initial stage and that the method used to solve the problem under study was correct.

Key words: sociocultural competence, students, non-language university, foreign language in professional direction, culture, background knowledge, realities.

У статті розглянуто проблему формування соціокультурної компетенції студентів, що навчаються в немовних закладах

вищої освіти, під час вивчення ними іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням. Наголошено на актуальності проблеми, оскільки нині іноземна мова стала засобом міжкультурної комунікації. Проаналізовано публікації закордонних і вітчизняних авторів, що досліджували згадану проблему. Використано найкращі поради фахівців, які стосуються вирішення вказаної проблеми. Сформульовано елементи соціокультурного змісту навчання іноземної мови та подано визначення фонових знань, необхідних для розвитку соціокультурної компетенції. Подано зразок тесту, який було запропоновано студентам на початковому етапі вивчення іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням для визначення їхнього рівня соціокультурних знань. Результати тестування показали, що цей рівень був низький. У процесі подальшого вивчення іноземної мови в немовному закладі вищої освіти наголошено на необхідності знайомити студентів не тільки з мовою та культурою Великобританії та Сполучених Штатів Америки, а також із загальноєвропейською культурою та європейським культурним розмаїттям. З огляду на прагнення України увійти до Європейського Союзу, зосереджено особливу увагу на прагненні до збалансованості інтересів представників різних країн і народів Європи, до проведення спільних акцій, спрямованих на розв'язання екологічних, економічних, соціальних і політичних проблем.

Для практичного опанування навичок соціокультурного спілкування використовувались рольові ігри, що моделювали ситуації усного та письмового спілкування з носіями мови, а також формували у студентів комунікативні моделі поведінки в різних життєвих ситуаціях у закордонних країнах. На завершальному етапі вивчення іноземної мови за професійним спрямуванням у немовному закладі вищої освіти було проведено тест на визначення рівня соціокультурних знань, яких набули студенти у процесі навчання. Результати тестування засвідчили, що рівень їхньої соціокультурної компетенції значно зріс порівняно з тим, який був на початковому етапі, та що спосіб, який використовувався для вирішення досліджуваної проблеми, був правильним.

Ключові слова: соціокультурна компетенція, студенти, немовний ЗВО, іноземна мова за професійним спрямуванням, культура, фонові знання, реалії.

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Oryshchyn I.S.,
Senior Lecturer at the Department
of Economics and Marketing
Lviv Polytechnic National University

Problem statement. The new social order of society today is to teach students a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication, as a way of knowledge about the achievements of national, European and common to mankind culture, to prepare them for tolerant perception of foreign culture, to understand the conventions of national stereotypes. In the modern

world the problem of mutual understanding between peoples remains unsolved, so it is very important to learn to overcome misunderstandings that arise when two cultures collide due to differences in historical, political and cultural development [1, p. 118].

The analysis of recent research and publications. Today there are a number of both

domestic and foreign publications that reveal certain features of sociocultural competence (N.F. Borysko, E.M. Vereshchahin, Z.H. Kostomarov, L.P. Holovanchuk, Yu.I. Passov, V.V. Safonova, O.I. Selivanova, O.B. Tarnopolsky, H.D. Tomakhin, V.M. Topalova, L. Damen, D. Killick, C. Kramersch, J. Munbay, R. Spack, P. Strevens, H.G. Widdowson [2, p. 9]).

The famous American methodist Robert Lado pointed to the need to adopt the culture of the people whose language is being studied. He supposed that the comprehensive mastery of the language being studied is indissolubly linked with the study of the culture of people and mastering the specific system of concepts typical for each nation [3, p. 26].

According to the definition of V.V. Kylyvnyk, the sociocultural competence of an individual is the quality that allows you to successfully communicate with the representatives of foreign culture, to feel confident and comfortable in a foreign language sociocultural environment; characterizes the theoretical and practical readiness for sociocultural activities; determines the appropriate value orientations of an individual and promotes their formation; is an important factor in the development of personality, its socialization in modern society, self-realization and cultural self-determination [4].

According to L.V. Vlasenko and N.O. Bozhok, the formation of sociocultural competence requires not only the knowledge of country studies as a set of scientific disciplines, but also the so-called background knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of a country and its culture, known to all inhabitants of a country (as opposed to universal or regional) [5].

Emphasizing previously unresolved parts of the common problem. However, of course, the best and most effective method of the formation of a foreign sociocultural and linguistic competence, according to N.M. Hordienko, is the method of mastering a language by direct immersion in a language environment, i.e. stay in the country whose language we are studying. It follows that based on real learning conditions, the most effective means of development of the sociocultural competence of students, learning a language outside a language environment, is immersion in a virtual space that simulates the necessary sociocultural characteristics of a society. Such a virtual space is the Internet – an authentic virtual interactive environment [6].

The goal of the article. However, most of the research work concerns language universities and high school. Therefore, the topic of our research became the problem of the development of the component of the content of foreign language teaching of non-language universities students. The important issues that determined the direction of this study are the requirements for graduates of non-language universities concerning their communication skills in the

process of foreign language communication. In particular, this concerns the sociocultural development of an individual.

The presentation of the basic research material. According to V.M. Topalova, the sociocultural component of the content of a foreign language learning includes:

- background knowledge of native speakers;
- the skills and abilities of speech and non-speech behavior;
- the national culture of the country whose language is studied [7, p. 38].

Background knowledge is the knowledge about a country and its culture, known to all residents of a certain country (as opposed to universal or regional). The possession of background knowledge seems to include a foreigner in a foreign language community, gives him “cultural literacy”, and vice versa – the lack of “cultural literacy” makes him a stranger who cannot understand what native speakers only hint in oral and written communication [2, p. 10].

Before studying the course “A foreign language for professional purposes”, we conducted a test to determine the initial level of sociocultural knowledge of students (based on English). The purpose of the test tasks was to check:

1. Geographical parameters (to determine the degree of awareness of the prevalence of English in the world).

Task № 1. Name all the countries and regions known to you in which English is spoken.

Task № 2. Show on the world map the English-speaking countries and areas named by you.

2. The contribution of the country whose language is being studied to world culture (to determine the level of awareness of the country's contribution to world civilization, as well as to the history and culture of Ukraine).

Task № 1. Do you know the history of the origin of the following geographical names: Oxford, Newcastle, Cambridge, English Channel, New Castle upon Tyne, Lincoln?

Task № 2. In what areas of human activity have the following individuals contributed: Shakespeare, Newton, Byron, Joel, Faraday, Darwin, Boyle, Chamberlain, Lennon, Drake, Nelson?

The areas of activity: a) physics; b) mathematics; c) music; d) chemistry; e) theatre; f) poetry; g) biology; h) navigation; i) politics.

3. Lifestyle (to determine the differences in the lifestyle of English and Ukrainian speakers).

Task № 1. Imagine this situation: you are a student and live in a hostel, your roommate is an English student. What, in your opinion, differences can you notice in his / her lifestyle?

4. The differences in the system of values (to determine the system and scale of values of the culture of the country whose language is studied).

Task № 1. Determine whether these statements are correct:

a) English students can earn money working in the evenings;

b) the majority of English parents support the intention of children to find additional work;

c) the majority of the English youth consider that it is necessary to receive education.

5. The understanding of external cultural differences. In English, there are rules different from the Ukrainian language for marking dates and times, national traditions and customs prescribe to eat food at other times of the day (lunch and dinner time differs in English and Ukrainian cultures), there are different rules for road signs, questionnaires, etc.

6. Linguistic realities (for an adequate understanding of the language of the interlocutor who speaks English, as well as certain linguistic realities that reflect the phenomena specific only to a particular culture).

Task № 1. Your English friend informs you in a letter that he/she intends to spend his/her Christmas holidays in Europe. When will this happen: a) in early December; b) in early January; c) in late December?

7. The understanding of the cultural values of the people – the bearer of a language and culture to determine the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of an interlocutor in different situations in English).

Task № 1. If your English interlocutor uses a one-syllable, short answer “Yes” or “No” in a conversation, what does it mean? (What subtext does his/her answer contain?).

Task № 2. You are in the classroom among your coevals – English college students. What, in your opinion, will be “strange” for them in your behaviour: a) during a lecture; b) during a practical lesson; c) during a break?

8. The analysis of cultural phenomena, concepts, the value system of the country whose language is being studied (to test the ability to analyse complex, “finished” sections of cultural life) [7, p. 39].

The test results showed the low level of sociocultural knowledge of the students. Therefore, during the

teaching of the English language course, along with the mastering of the necessary skills and abilities in language communication, we tried to eliminate the lack of sociocultural knowledge the students had to acquire in a high school. We also took into account the specialization of the course (for example, the English course for economics students had a series of linguistic and cultural realities, without which professional foreign language communication is impossible).

The practical experience showed that along with the language and culture of the United Kingdom (which are presented in most textbooks and materials) it is necessary to acquaint students with the language and culture of the United States. This is due to the fact that their future professional foreign language communication may take place with the representatives of American culture and the American version of English. Therefore, in the course of English in a non-language university it is advisable to include the basic facts that represent the cultural and linguistic realities of the United States [7, p. 39].

Taking into consideration Ukraine's desire to join the European Union, we considered it necessary to include in the sociocultural component of the content of a foreign language teaching topics that reflect:

- the geopolitical portrait of modern Europe;
- political and social European structures;
- the historical heritage of Europe, the ideas of statehood and freedom in society;
- all-European culture and European cultural diversity;
- multilingualism in modern Europe and linguistic human rights [1, p. 120].

In the process of teaching, we considered it important and necessary to develop skills to participate in the dialogue of cultures. An intercultural dialogue can only take place if communicators belong to different cultures, and this requires modelling the situations of oral and written communication with native speakers. Here a role-play was of use, in which one of the communicators spoke on his own name, and the other

Task № 1. Fill in the application form for employment
APPLICATION FORM

Mr/Mrs _____
 First name _____ Surname _____
 Nationality _____
 Age _____ Job _____
 Marital Status _____
 single _____
 married _____
 divorced _____
 widow(er) _____
 Home address _____
 Date _____
 Signature _____

took the role of a native speaker of a foreign language [2, p. 9]. This role-play helped to prepare for the dialogue of cultures, which involves:

- the knowledge of the peculiarities and achievements of the culture of native people, the readiness to present the native culture in a foreign environment;
- the ability to explain the facts of native culture to a foreign guest, the experience of a cultural mediator between the representatives of native and foreign cultures;
- the awareness of the cultural features of the main nations and nationalities inhabiting Ukraine, willingness to tell about them in detail in a foreign language [1, p. 121].

In a role-play, the communicative models of behaviour in different life situations in foreign countries are being formed, which the young citizens of Ukraine will need to have during their actual stay in the country whose language they studied.

Before completing the foreign language course, we conducted the second series of tests to determine the degree of the development of the sociocultural competence of the students. The testing was performed according to the parameters similar to those that were included in the test before studying a foreign language course. But there were more tasks, and they were more difficult. The test results showed that the degree of the development of sociocultural competence has increased significantly.

Conclusions. Thus, in order to form students' sociocultural competence, it is necessary to systematically include cultural and regional information to be

used in oral and written communication, purposefully develop intercultural skills, and teach students the communicative patterns of behaviour in a foreign language environment.

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