Cultural Component in Learning Foreign Languages

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Abstract: The cultural component has always been one of the most important aspects of intercultural language teaching and is based on the following principles: awareness of one's own culture; study of language culture; comparison of the cultures under consideration.

Key words: cultural component; teaching a foreign language; interculturality; studied language culture; communication, language skills.

At present, socio-economic relations dictate such conditions that people must speak two or more languages, which gives them more opportunities in any field, such as business, banking, diplomacy, medicine, and so on. Thus, language proficiency in any case means the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people representing other cultures and speaking other languages. In fact, this means that the student not only acquires language skills, but also becomes a carrier of the language culture of the language being studied.

Thus, when learning a foreign language, it is necessary to introduce a broader approach to the cultural component in the educational process. Culture is an integral part of any language course, therefore, it must be taught in parallel with the language from the very first steps and the importance of intercultural learning or intercultural interaction in the teaching of a foreign language must be recognized.

The term "cultural" is often associated with the term "social", for example, when talking about "socio-cultural" factors influencing the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Many scholars do not make any distinction between the social and the cultural. The article will consider the cultural component as a generalized term of both terms.

The cultural component is a set of knowledge about the country of the language being studied, the national and cultural characteristics of the social and speech behavior of native speakers. The presence of a cultural component in the content of educational programs for teaching a foreign language is becoming increasingly necessary. The cultural component should include information about the country of the language being studied, spiritual values, cultural traditions, peculiarities of the national mentality, history and rules of etiquette when communicating in this language. In the process of studying cultural materials, students develop sociocultural competence, which largely determines the degree of education of the student.

The cultural component plays one of the fundamentally important roles in modern education, as it helps to overcome:

a) xenophobia, which, according to O. Fedorova [2005], is a fear of something alien, potentially dangerous and hostile,

b) existing stereotypes.

In recent decades, the teaching of culture and intercultural competence has been recognized as a priority in educational outcomes. Current research in the field of foreign language education is approaching the concept of culture through its application to social norms, values, and beliefs, which can influence many aspects of the use, teaching, and learning of a foreign language. Language plays an important role in the construction of culture and the emergence of cultural change, and many researchers emphasize the inextricable link between language and culture. For example, a report by the Modern Language Association [2007] on teaching culture in the context of globalization states that language and culture are closely related: "Language is a complex multifunctional phenomenon that connects a person with other people, with communities and national cultures" and "Culture is represented not only in events, texts, buildings, works of art, cuisines and many other artifacts, but also in the language itself."

Communication will not be successful if the knowledge of the language is not based on the knowledge of the culture. No one can master a language without knowing its culture, otherwise misunderstandings may arise during communication. Getting into a new socio-cultural context, people who learn a foreign language must be aware of cultural differences, because even a lexically and grammatically correct statement may have some difference in the culture of the interlocutor, which can cause certain problems of understanding. In fact, the level of language proficiency is achieved when the connection between language and culture is provided. The culture of teaching can be described as a complex technique that includes not only the presentation of the facts, history and cultural problems of the country of the language being studied, but also the study, description and analysis of the material under consideration. Thus, the role of a language teacher is to develop skills, attitudes and values, as well as to develop knowledge about a particular culture or country.

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The cultural component should become an integral part of teaching a foreign language. The fact that both language and culture carry meaning and are used to describe and complement each other makes it necessary to emphasize certain principles in the teaching of culture. Crozet and Liddicoat [2000] introduced five principles to facilitate this process:

1) Culture is integrated into language macro-skills, not a separate macro-skill, and culture needs to be taught simultaneously with language teaching and integrated into it;

2) Culture is taught from the very beginning of language learning and is not delayed until students have mastered the language;

3) A bilingual speaker is the norm and learners are expected to become competent users of a complex linguistic assortment that includes several languages;

4) Language acquisition involves intercultural acquisition;

5) Cultural learning involves learning how to learn new information about a culture.

As Wei points out, language has a dual character: both as a communication tool and as a carrier of culture. Language without culture is unthinkable, human culture without language is also unthinkable. A certain language is a mirror of a certain culture. Brown describes the relationship between language and culture as follows: "Language is part of culture and culture is part of language; these two concepts are intertwined, so that it is impossible to separate them without losing the meaning of either language or culture. In a word, culture and language are inseparable. When it comes to the essence of teaching and learning a foreign language, the interdependence of language learning and culture is so obvious that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning. Teachers of foreign languages should be aware of the place of studying culture in a foreign language group and try to improve the cultural competence of students and improve their communicative competence. Wei also states that "teaching a foreign language is teaching a foreign culture, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers." According to Tomalin, the international role of the English language and globalization are the two main reasons why culture should be taught as a fifth language skill in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. Cultural studies teach us the approach and technique of adapting our use of the English language to learn, understand and appreciate the principles, ways of doing things and the unique qualities of other cultures. This includes understanding how to use the language to embrace change, be flexible, and be tolerant of ways of doing things that may be different from ours. It is a change of attitude that is expressed through the use of language. Tomalin also argues that the cultural component in learning a foreign language should include cultural knowledge, cultural values, cultural behavior, and cultural skills of the country of the language being studied.

Language is the bearer of culture, and vocabulary is the main component of the language. Cultural differences will inevitably show up in vocabulary, and vocabulary explanations will also reflect national or cultural changes. As an example, consider the white color, which in different cultures has opposite interpretations. So in Yemen, white is used as a symbol of kindness, piety and purity, and therefore a girl wears white clothes on her wedding day as a symbol of kindness, chastity and fidelity. On the other hand, given that white is the opposite of their culture in China, they only use it at funerals when one of the family members is dead. It also goes against the Arab culture which forces people to wear black at their funeral ceremonies. Another example, if an Englishman orders a "hot dog" in an Arab restaurant, no one will understand that he is asking for a "hot sandwich", and they will probably laugh at him. Thus, learning a language involves not only knowing its grammatical rules and the denotative meanings of words, but much more, such as cultural customs, lifestyle, food and habits, history, and everything that consists of it. In a word, culture is a comprehensive combination with many meanings, and each of its factors can be expressed in words.

Among the urgent problems of the development of university education in our country, one can single out the problem of the correspondence of the education system to the needs of the development of civilizational and cultural processes.

Traditionally, the teaching of foreign language culture is associated with linguistic and cultural studies, which contain information about the history and culture of the country whose language is being studied. Sometimes the authors include in the cultural content of teaching a foreign language and knowledge about all spheres of life in the country of the language being studied (national realities, major historical events, the most important representatives of science, literature, politics, and so on), as well as the development of the ability to communicate in various life situations.

There is another point of view, the supporters of which oppose the inclusion of a cultural component in teaching a foreign language. This is motivated by the fact that discussion of differences between linguistic and cultural communities can cause hostility towards another culture.

Instead, they recommend turning to humanistic values common to all mankind. But this theory does not receive wide support, since sooner or later students will encounter the peculiarities of the culture of the people of the language being studied, and it is better if in their behavior they are guided not by the prevailing stereotypes about the features of this language, but by the knowledge received from specialists.

Another point of view is that, for example, English is an international language, and it is not necessary to know the cultural characteristics of the peoples who speak it. This would be true if it were a dead language. But a living language reflects the consciousness of the people who speak it, and as long as people are alive, the language is also alive. Any language, like its territorial variant, bears the imprint of the culture of the people who speak it. To deprive a language of a cultural

component means to devastate, stifle and turn it into some kind of artificial language. Sometimes this actually happens: for many professionals working in a narrow technical discipline, English often becomes such an artificial language, sufficient for professional communication, but not in everyday situations.

This article has already mentioned that in the context of the socio-cultural component in teaching a foreign language, culture acts as a dialogue between two different cultures. But a real dialogue of cultures can only take place in "the consciousness of a bearer of a certain culture who has managed to comprehend the images of consciousness of another (foreign) culture", "dialogue of cultures is not so much communication of different consciousnesses as communication of images of different cultures within the same consciousness" [4] .

Thus, given the fact that cultural competence is an integral part of the teaching of foreign languages, it is necessary to develop a structure or curriculum that would meet the requirements of the new time and meet the needs of students. The cultural component becomes a key factor in the process of teaching a foreign language. Therefore, the context of language teaching should be developed along with language competencies at all levels of education.

Intercultural language teaching, which is a rather sophisticated approach to teaching a second or third language, fills the gap as it functions effectively and encourages learners to accumulate eloquent knowledge with excellent feedback. When the cultural dimension is emphasized, students are motivated to use their acquired communication skills in intercultural dialogue.

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