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FACETS OF CULTURE CONCEPT:  
PRINCIPLES OF INTERCULTURAL TEACHING

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**Abstract**

In the course of perceiving one's own and foreign culture we turn out to be at the interface of two cultures. It approaches us to intercultural world outlook. The term «intercultural» implies reciprocity, interaction and mutual influence between representatives of different languages, cultures and ethnic groups. In order to be aware of the importance of the burning issue the author pays special attention to the problem of studying the notion «culture», which is represented in different sources as elementary, relevant, referring to a group, contested.

The long-term process of learning culture and forming the intercultural world outlook involves not only learning culture-specific vocabulary, but also developing such qualities as empathy, acknowledgement of cultural diversity, tolerance, an ability to distance oneself from position, cultural identity, etc. This purpose may be achieved by applying active methods of teaching. It is supposed that implementing the culture-through-language studies aspect will enable to approach awareness of cultural differences and will help to form the intercultural competence, in which the above mentioned elements are included.

One should admit that not all students possess these traits and one of the primary purposes of a foreign language teacher becomes broadening the scope of students, awareness of linguistic and cultural picture of the world and forming intercultural world outlook. It goes without saying that developing the intercultural competence, combining social and communicative skills: empathy, an ability of dealing with a conflict, working collaboratively, flexibility, awareness of a foreign language, speech speeds, speech patterns, functional styles, etc. Some researchers affirm that intercultural communicative competence also entails linguistic competence, vocabulary, syntax, morphology, etc.; sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural competence.

The article highlights the models of intercultural teaching. The author investigates the principles of teaching culture and language and the models of assessing intercultural skills on the basis of foreign colleagues' experience.

**Keywords:** intercultural world outlook; intercultural competence; empathy; culture-through-language studies aspect; culture-specific vocabulary; target culture

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АСПЕКТЫ ПОНЯТИЯ 'КУЛЬТУРА':  
ПРИНЦИПЫ ИНТЕРКУЛЬТУРНОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ

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**Аннотация**

В ходе познания своей собственной и иноязычной культуры мы оказываемся на стыке двух культур, что приближает нас к интеркультурному мировидению. Понятие «интеркультурный» предполагает взаимодействие и взаимное влияние представителей разных языков, культур и этносов. Для осознания важности затронутой проблемы автор акцентирует внимание на проблеме рассмотрения понятия «культура». В многочисленных источниках она представлена по-разному: как элементарная, относительная, групповая, оспариваемая.

Долгосрочный процесс изучения культуры и формирования интеркультурного мировидения подразумевает не только изучение культурно-маркированной лексики, но и развитие таких качеств, как эмпатия, признание культурного многообразия, толерантность, умение дистанцироваться от своей позиции, культурная идентичность и т.д., что может быть достигнуто путем использования активных методов обучения. Предполагается, что внедрение лингвострановедческого аспекта в обучение иностранному языку позволит осознать культурные различия и поможет сформировать интеркультурную компетенцию, в которую входят вышеназванные элементы.

Следует признать, что не все студенты обладают данными качествами и одной из первостепенных задач учителя иностранного языка становится расширение кругозора учащихся, признание ими лингвистической и культурной картины мира и формирование интеркультурного мировидения. Неоспоримым фактом является необходимость совершенствования интеркультурной компетенции, сочетающей социальные и коммуникативные навыки: эмпатию, способность разрешать конфликт, работать в сотрудничестве, гибкость, знание иностранного языка, темпа речи, речевых моделей, речевых стилей и т.д. Некоторые исследователи утверждают, что интеркультурная коммуникативная компетенция также включает лингвистическую компетенцию, лексику, синтаксис, морфологию и т.д.; социолингвистическую, дискурсивную и интеркультурную компетенцию. В статье приводятся в пример модели интеркультурного обучения. Автор делает обзор принципов обучения культуре и языку и моделей оценивания интеркультурных навыков на основе опыта зарубежных коллег.

**Ключевые слова:** интеркультурное мировидение; интеркультурная компетенция; эмпатия; лингвострановедческий аспект; культурно-маркированная лексика; иноязычная культура.

Nowadays, one of the essential and topical issues of the training of a foreign language teacher has become an absolute necessity of deeper studying of foreigner's world. S.G. Ter-Minasova believes that the basis of any communication is "a reciprocal code", the knowledge of words-realia and the subject of intercourse between interlocutors [12, p.150]. That is why while mastering foreign languages it is important to learn country-specific information to apprehend values of the target culture.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English by A.S. Hornby defines culture as a way of life – the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group; art, music, literature, etc., thought of as a group; the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group share [3, p. 373].

It is important to underline interrelation and connection of language and culture endowing a possibility to become a "spiritual" person with cultural wealth and moral values. The necessity of striving for broadening and enriching the linguistic picture of the world and the process of inculturation in the multicultural environment should be noted.

The strong point of this approach lies in the fact that when a student gets to know both his own and different culture he/ she accommodates himself/ herself to an intercultural vision of the world, which results in working out an intercultural world outlook. The intercultural dwells on what occurs when

members of two or more different cultural groups interact or influence one another [4, p. 11].

Numerous questions come to mind when we think how to implement culture into the foreign language learning. What are the facets of the culture? What are they aimed at? What does the term 'inter'-cultural imply? What relevant technologies are in use for culture learning? I'll try to clear up these and some other issues connected with culture.

There is no doubt that it is vital to investigate a framework for understanding the complex relationship between languages and cultures within a range of language teaching contexts. Culture can be considered as elemental, with students entirely plunged in their own culture. New-born babies are a "blank slate", gradually acquiring particular notions, stereotypes about their own culture and later thinking up expectations about the second culture reality. Culture as relative can be understood in terms of another and as a multiple group membership is regulated formally and informally. Lindsay, Robins and Terrell suppose that culture refers to groupness. Culture being contested implies "clash of cultures" and experiencing "culture shock" [5].

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that culture-specific vocabulary is an integral component of culture-through-language studies. It will lead to the awareness of cultural differences and specific character of vocabulary. It is well-known that the process of developing a cross-cultural competence

includes not only the knowledge of words-realia, but also empathy; an ability to distance oneself from one's position; acknowledgement of cultural diversity, tolerance; cultural and ethnic identity. However, most of students have a lack of such traits of character and I suppose that developing these qualities is one of the purposes of developing the students' intercultural world outlook as a result of which a linguistic and cultural picture of the world becomes recognized and understood.

Forming the intercultural world outlook is a complicated and long-term process demanding account of different subject areas and using of active methods of teaching. Teachers should guide students and promote to their achieving the level of personality at the turn of cultures for acculturation, i.e. learning to live successfully in a different culture. In this case it will be possible to obtain the intercultural communication competence.

Nowadays, the notion 'intercultural language learning' has appeared where 'inter'-cultural implies back-and-forth movement across languages and cultures [11]. Culture learning is the dynamic and on-going process of acquiring the culture-specific and background knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective communication. Paige and Stringer developed a model for intercultural learning containing the following facets: learning about oneself as a cultural being; learning about culture and its impact on human language, behaviour, and identity; cultural adjustment. Judging by these aspects one can say that culture-specific learning is focused on learning with an emphasis on a particular language and culture [9].

The process of intercultural learning results in forming and developing the intercultural competence. Meyer distinguishes the intercultural competence which is a combination of social and communicative skills, including: empathy, ability to deal with conflict, ability to work collaboratively, flexibility, foreign language awareness, awareness that culture causes different discussion styles, speech speeds, interpretation and thought patterns, etc. [8, p. 136-158]. Byram defined a model of the intercultural communicative competence which comprises four elements: linguistic competence, lexicon, syntax, morphology, semantics, etc.; sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural competence [1].

The common features of models for intercultural teaching offered by Byram, Crozet, Kramsch, etc.) are: exploration by the learners of their own and target language and culture; discovery of the relationship between language and culture; developing conceptual and analytic tools for

comparing and understanding cultures; developing a reflective capacity to deal with cultural difference and to modify behaviour where needed [10].

Crozet and Liddicoat name four main activities redounding to language and culture acquisition: acquisition knowledge about cultures, comparing cultures, exploring cultures, finding one's own 'third place' between cultures. The principles of teaching culture within language include: culture needs to be taught simultaneously with and integrated into language teaching. Teachers shouldn't worry about not having enough insight into the other culture as non-native speakers. In an intercultural approach the teacher needs to know something about both cultures so being a native speaker doesn't ensure it. In order to raise awareness such authentic video materials as cartoons and stories may be involved. The use of the Internet is also helpful in terms of cultural learning. The experimentation stage involves short, supported communicative tasks which practise elements of the new knowledge and building new speech situations. The best way to achieve the stage of production is through involvement in a focused language task. For spoken language this can be done through role-plays, preferably unscripted role plays if the students are at a stage to be able to do these. During feedback the student discusses with the teacher how he/she felt about speaking and acting in a particular way. It enables the teacher to comment on the language use of the student, but also allows the student to express how he/she felt [6].

One should take into account drawing out, through interactive talk, questioning, scaffolding, and providing feedback, the implicit conceptions and the explanatory systems of learners creates a culture of inquiry and reflection in the classroom and develops intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural language learning is based on a set of principles to guide curriculum design and classroom interaction to promote effective intercultural language learning: active construction means exploring language and culture through active engagement, developing a personal, intercultural space. Making connections is comparing languages and cultures and drawing connections between home and target language and culture. Social interaction is communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It is important to reflect on linguistic and cultural differences and similarities. Accepting responsibility contributes to successful communication across languages and cultures.

Paige and his colleagues propose employing assessment models designed for assessing cultural awareness in the assessment of intercultural

competence as a language competence. They examine three different types of assessment tests: attitudinal tests, culture assimilator tests, cultural awareness tests. Attitudinal tests are designed to measure people's reactions to a cultural group. Culture assimilator tests include contextual information in the form of short episodes of intercultural interaction and involve the respondent's reaction. Culture awareness tests examine cultural knowledge in the form of communicative tasks: spoken interaction, interactive computer tasks, monologic spoken or writing tasks [9].

I affirm by the research that one of the burning issues in the process of foreign languages teacher's professional training has become the necessity of more meticulous studying of native speakers' world. Unfortunately, the ideas of intercultural communication are rarely involved in the process of studying foreign languages. But we shouldn't neglect intercultural communication which is a complex competence revealing a wide range of questions connected with invisible aspects such as behaviour based on the beliefs and values of a given social group.

In spite of the difficulties of teaching culture in language classrooms, students and teachers should not be culturally neutral which means bringing a cultural background to the interaction. It is not enough to know just the words, grammar structures and culture-specific vocabulary. One of the most frequently repeated and underlined objectives of intercultural learning includes developing such a quality as empathy which runs as follows: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner [7]. Empathy is most often defined by the metaphors of 'standing in someone else's shoes' or 'seeing through someone else's eyes'. It means frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his or her inner world [2].

It is of great importance to conduct a reflective analysis aimed at culturally useful learning while using authentic materials. It is also recommended to play traditional games, participate in cultural dances, music and songs, discuss the origins of the writing system and their cultural links. At a global level the goals of intercultural language learning entail understanding and valuing the native and target language and culture, perceiving how to interpose

among languages and cultures, developing intercultural empathy as an everlasting objective.

Some procedures for formative assessment used in intercultural language learning include checklist tasks; informal interactions to measure learners' opinions, gaps and dispositions towards learning; dramatisations and role-plays; assessment tasks and projects; reflective writing to assess learners' conceptions of language, culture, and learning and their interrelationship. In order to maximise learning, each task should be interrelated with prior learning and contribute to learners' broadening and deepening world outlook. Tasks connected as clusters form units of work, may include diary-writing, cinema, advertisements, research investigation. Students must be able to distinguish, analyse and interpret sociocultural facts from authentic sources, get on well with representatives of studied culture taking into consideration etiquette principles, keep away from cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstanding in communication. Forming the intercultural world outlook and competence will endow students to master these skills.

The process of teaching students cultural interaction should cater for moulding and developing habits, skills and abilities for effective interaction with representatives of other cultures. To implement the formulated aims it is also required to get to grips about the issue of native and target culture, cultural stereotypes and habits of communicating. So, the intercultural communication can be defined as an interpretative process in which the degree of difference between people is large and where ethnic groups strive for overcoming estrangement.

All in all, teachers should help students to boost their awareness of the cultural connotations of words-realia and to arouse students' curiosity about the target culture. One of the teacher's primary goals is to contribute to students' establishing rapport with other people. Finally, it is preferable to help students to develop the necessary skills to manage information about the target culture. Intercultural language learning is not simply a 'method' of 'implementing' language, culture, and learning, but rather, an overall perspective, which influences all decisions concerning curriculum design.

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