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## КРОСС-КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ АСПЕКТ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКАМ

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## CROSS-CULTURAL ASPECT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### Introduction

In an era which is defined by process of globalization and interconnectedness the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries now has become an essential skill. And the more effectively you do it, more connections you make the better. Thus, language learning goes beyond simple vocabulary acquisition and grammar theory; it necessitates a deep understanding and appreciation of the cultures associated with the target language. If to consider language teaching from the cross-cultural perspective, we may recognize that language is inseparably linked to culture, and that effective foreign language education must integrate cultural awareness to foster intercultural competence of learners. Including cross-cultural aspects into the language classroom, it will become possible to empower students to be more effective communicators, more empathetic individuals, and more engaged global citizens as well. So, as we can see, cross-cultural component is non the least essential as the language system itself.

"Cross-cultural communication is a field of study investigating how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures"[1]. Cross-cultural issue is connected with the comparison of different cultures. Language is a significant part of a culture which reflects the difference on social level. To reach effective cross-cultural communication first of all we should overcome such cultural differences such as religion, nationality, traditions and moral values. Due to the process of globalization intercultural communication has become a fundamental issue. To effectively contact representatives of other cultures we should have a theoretical minimum of information about the peculiarities of thinking, be-

havior, etiquette, verbal and non-verbal communication, as they are an integral part of communication. Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist conducted extensive a research on cross-cultural groups and organizations. He is particularly well known for one of the widely used frameworks for evaluating frameworks for assessing cultural dimensions from a global point of view. By the way these frameworks were the earliest considered this theme. According to G. Hofstede "the subject of cross-cultural studying is the process of communication at different levels and in different forms of an intercultural environment. In this regard, to adapt to new cultural contexts we need to develop skills of intercultural competence, so we could respect and understand other culture better"[2].

### **Cross-culture and foreign language teaching connection**

Cross-cultural communication and foreign language teaching are inseparable from each other. Within the culture language reflects forms national consciousness and expresses the attitude to the world. Language is a complex code, which was created for sharing thoughts to one another. The primary benefit of language lies in its remarkable flexibility. The meanings of words can vary, evolve, or even be newly established. This is demonstrated by the fact that new words are appearing and the meaning of existing words definitions are changing over the time. This allows us to react immediately to major environmental, historical, and social change, as well as to adapt faster to new conditions through the linguistic viewpoint.

The significance of teaching foreign languages as a tool for communication among individuals from diverse nations and cultures lies in the necessity of studying these languages in conjunction with the world and culture of their speakers. It is essential to educate individuals not only to comprehend a foreign language but also to produce it effectively for communication through speaking and writing skills. This task presents significant challenges, as communication extends beyond verbal process. Numerous factors must be considered, including the context of the conversation, cultural norms, etiquette, non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures, the background knowledge. Each of these elements play a crucial role in communication success[3].

According to S.G. Ter-Minasova, "knowing the meanings and rules of grammar is clearly not enough to actively use language as a means of communication. It is necessary to know as deeply as possible the world of the language being studied. In addition to the meanings and rules of grammar, you need to know when and where you should say or write; how it should be done, in what manner; to whom should you appeal; how a given meaning/concept, a given thought exists in the reality of the language being studied"[4].

For instance, a student learns that "thank you" translates to "Merci" in French and understands the grammatical rules for forming sentences well, so we may assure that there wouldn't be any difficulties to make a sentence. However, they overuse "Merci" in most cases, even when a more nuanced or even formal expression of gratitude is required. They are grammatically correct but culturally not so appropriate. A more formal way to thank someone instead of "Merci" is to use the verb "remercier" with a pronoun after it.

Let's see the other example, which we are all familiar with in most cultures. For sure you might have heard a common phrase in English "What's up?", which you might say to a friend. This is quite a casual greeting which we are used to say when meet someone. However, saying the same phrase to your boss or a professor would be highly inappropriate. It is extremely important to know when and to whom this greeting is acceptable. A more formal greeting such as "Good morning" or "How are you?" would be more suitable in those situations.

Continuing on the topic, the importance of using the correct communication style is worth mentioning. Imagine that you are writing a letter of complaint. You understand what vocabulary you need and grammar constructions to express your dissatisfaction. However, the manner of style in which you write it is crucial. Being over aggressive or using insulting words, even if it is grammatically correct, will definitely be counterproductive. Choosing the appropriate tone (e.g., polite, assertive, factual) for a given situation is essential.

Sometimes it might be difficult to express and reflect the meaning of a particular phenomenon. One of them is the English word "privacy" which is often difficult to translate into other languages saving its direct meaning. Of course the words that relate to personal space or seclusion definitely exist, but the concept of privacy as it is understood in Western individualistic cultures might not exist and understood in the same way in more collectivist societies. The reality of how "privacy" is experienced and valued differs in other cultures, impacting how one would communicate about that theme. In our culture we have another example of inexplicable meaning as the word "Toska". As you may guess it does not have direct translation into English. Although, that word means a sensation of great spiritual anguish, often without a specific cause. These examples highlight that learning language is not just about memorizing vocabulary and a set of grammar rules, but about understanding the complex interaction between language, culture, and social context. It requires a deeper understanding of when, where, how, and to whom to use language appropriately, and how the concepts and ideas which are embedded within the language are understood and experienced by native speakers. If to these details, the contextual meaning would be clear.

For vivid example we can consider the concept of "face" in many East Asian cultures. The desire not to "lose face" during the meeting or conversation crucially influences on our choice of communication styles, polite tone, the use of honorifics, sometimes we forced to indirectness. This cultural value is reflected in linguistic choices, such as the use of euphemisms to soften potentially offensive statements in order not to hurt anyone. For example, in Western cultures it is accepted to say "He passed away" instead of saying "He died". Also it's common to use phrases like "He's gone to a better place" or "He's no longer with us". This softens somehow the directness of death.

Financial difficulties are also not widely discussed, that's why they are often become the subject of euphemization. Thus, in English-speaking countries instead of saying that someone is "poor" or "broke", one might say "They are financially challenged", "They are experiencing economic hardship", or "They are between

jobs" if someone doesn't have a job on the moment. In Russian instead of saying that someone is poor or without money, you may say "Он стеснен в средствах" (He is restricted in means). As you can see through these examples, the using of softer words doesn't change the meaning, so everyone understands the situation, but at the same time it sounds not so straight and hurtful.

In a similar way, nonverbal communication has great varieties across different cultures. It may be highly specific for each culture. Thus, gesture that is considered as polite in one culture may be offensive in another one. Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and foster positive intercultural interactions. Let's analyze the "Okay" sign (thumb and forefinger forming a circle). In the USA it is generally means "okay", "good" or "fine". While in some parts of the Middle East it can be offensive gesture which implies the "eye of evil". In Germany it can signify "zero" or "worthless" in certain contexts. In France that means "worthless" or "nothing". There is another gesture which is similar to "Okay" sign it is called "Thumbs up" sign. Again, in the USA and many Western cultures it is generally a sign of approval, agreement or gratitude for a good job. In some parts of the Middle East, Greece and Nigeria it can be considered as rude, highly offensive or even extremely insulting. These examples show us that we should know the meaning of a particular gesture before using it, even if we have the same one in our culture.

Consequently, a foreign language can be regarded as a tool for developing communicative competence. This primarily entails, the capability to effectively transform communicative goals and strategies for their attainment into linguistic forms, as well as the proficiency in using the norms of speech etiquette and social behavior in case of intercultural communication, where understanding of the situational and sociocultural contexts of a foreign-language community is analyzed.

Effective cross-cultural communication needs the following skills:

#### ✓ Listening Skills

While many of learners focus on becoming more proficient speakers, effective listening is a crucial skill which is often underestimated and not paid much attention. In cross-cultural communication, active and empathetic listening is essential part. It allows us to discern nuances beyond the spoken words, interpret hidden meanings, and foster genuine understanding and connection with the speaker.

Thus, if you hear "That is a very interesting idea, let's consider it further" instead of directly rejecting the proposal, you may read between the lines, you may assume that they are not likely in favor of the proposal.

#### ✓ Speaking Skills

For effective cross-cultural communication, listening and speaking are interdependent skills which must work together. Eloquent speech extends beyond perfect pronunciation without accent and a diverse command of grammar and vocabulary. Rather, positive and supportive communication that might be expressed through encouragement, affirmation, clear and considerate requests, and the sensi-

tive and sincere sharing of opinions significantly enriches cross-cultural interactions.

Remember, that by offering encouragement and affirmation (That's an interesting perspective) you can create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable while sharing their ideas, leading to a more creative and collaborative outcome.

#### ✓ Observation

A quality and effectiveness of cross-cultural information can be gleaned from observing people's attire, body language, interactions, and behavior during conversations. It's crucial to be mindful of differences compared to your own culture and try to understand the underlying motivations behind observed behaviors. As a matter of fact, asking clarifying questions of your interlocutor is an excellent way to deepen your cross-cultural understanding.

You might ask polite questions about the traditions, demonstrating your interest and willingness to learn new details of the other culture.

#### ✓ Patience

It's important that people should acknowledge with cross-cultural differences despite the fact that it can be irritating sometimes and cause frustration. When such situations happen, patience becomes invaluable quality. By exercising patience, we foster greater cross-cultural understanding and earn respect in return. If you hold patience, continue to engage in polite conversation, and promote the relationship which develops gradually. Eventually, your patience will certainly pay off, and you will reach a mutually beneficial agreement based on a foundation of trust and understanding.

#### ✓ Flexibility

Flexibility, adaptability, and open-mindedness are quite essential skills for successful cross-cultural communication. When we understand, accept and resolve cross-cultural differences, we can finally break cultural barriers, establish stronger lines of communication, foster mutual trust, and unlock innovative ways of thinking.

Following these five cross-cultural communication needs will allow us to improve lines of communication and better cross-cultural awareness and successful cross-cultural relationships [5].

### **Conclusion**

Language doesn't exist separately from the culture. Culture includes all the norms of behavior, national arts and beliefs that are passed through generations to generation. Culture is often considered as "the way of life for an entire society" and the reason is: it unites all together the codes of manners, religion and rituals, dress, and of course norms of behavior (for example law and morality).

The impact of different cultural perspectives on people's behavior strategies promotes evolution such qualities as empathy, tolerance, and a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. Learners become more aware of their own cultural biases, develop the ability to see the world from different viewpoints and expand their range of vision. This highly developed cultural sensitivity allows them to build stronger relationships with people from different backgrounds.

Moreover, culture is essentially symbolic. And the most prominent example which illustrates this is language. The most important, influential and demonstrative aspect of culture is language because by using words we are able represent objects and ideas. Through language, human can give cultural peculiarities from one generation to another. Language, in its turn, makes it possible for us to share our personal experience. It helps not only to speak out when we need it, but also allows to learn from one another. Without that, we couldn't express our emotions and feelings, it would be impossible to inform others about events and other significant experiences.

If to speak about personal experience, cultural projects, such as researching and presenting on specific cultural topics, are definitely worth mentioning. Assigning these kinds of projects can promote independent learning and cultural exploration. Learners can research information on topics such as traditional music, art, literature, history, or cuisine and explore the differences and richness of the world's cultures.

Language is functioning not only as a component of culture but also it is appeared to be an instrument through which culture might be defined and described. As we can see, the cross-cultural aspect is evident within the language system and significantly impacts on communication and its quality. It allows us to understand not only the literal meaning of words, but the national characteristics, attitude and perception of the world.

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