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## **MODERN APPROACHES IN STUDENTS INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY FORMATION AT BUSINESS ENGLISH LESSONS**

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*Language is a part of culture, and plays a very important role in the development of the culture. Some sociologists consider it as the keystone of culture. They believe, without language, culture would not be available. At the same time, language is influenced and shaped by culture, it reflects culture. Therefore, culture plays a very important part in language teaching. The article outlines the main approaches in the students intercultural competency formation at Business English lessons. The necessity of studying intercultural differences for successful business communication is argued. The author describes discussions, debates, presentations and project work as the most effective ways of students intercultural competency formation at Business English lessons.*

*Key words: intercultural competency, Business English, business correspondence, discussions, presentation, debates, projects.*

**Introduction.** Global integration and the development of modern technologies have significantly expanded the boundaries of intercultural communication. We have a unique opportunity to use the intellectual achievements of the world's treasury. However, for many people these borders remain closed because of languages ignorance.

In the modern world, foreign languages have become not only a mean of international communication, but also a way to achieve a better standard of living. Without knowledge of foreign languages, it is difficult to get an

education in a foreign university, to find a good job with the prospect of an internship abroad and, as a result, career growth. In addition, more and more people are seriously planning to change their place of residence forever.

Knowledge of English as a language of business communication, can help future specialists to promote their professional contacts, to study and use foreign experience in certain industries, to participate in international congresses, conferences and seminars, to have internships abroad, to improve written communication skills.

Thus, the teaching of English includes not only the linguistic knowledge and skills, but also understanding the nature of communication in the professional sphere, mastering the methods of its implementation, intercultural awareness, and also the generalization of knowledge and skills obtained by students during the studying of special, social and humanitarian disciplines.

**Analysis of publications.** The concept "intercultural competency" was carried out by various scholars. Thus, I. Zimnya, A. Khutorskyi, S. Nikolaev, N. Muraveva, O. Lazareva consider it in the context of a competent approach in foreign language teaching. L. Korotka [2] and I. Fedorova [4] consider culture as an important component of foreign language studying. M. Byram [1] emphasizes on the teaching languages in connection with cultures. S. Ter-Minasova [3] studied the problem of teaching foreign languages and proved that they should be taught in inseparable unity with the world and culture of peoples, which speak this language.

However, the problem of students intercultural competency formation at Business English lessons is not sufficiently studied.

**The aim of the article** is to study and to analyze current approaches in the formation of students intercultural competency at Business English lessons.

**Materials and methods.** Many now argue that the role of the English language in the curriculum is a life skill and should be taught as a core curriculum subject like maths, and the mother tongue. The reason for this is globalisation and the fact that to operate internationally people will need to be able to use a lingua franca. For the next twenty to thirty years at least, that language is likely to be English. That means that English will be a core communicative skill and will need to be taught at universities.

In current economical and political situation, an expert should understand modern market requirements for the profession he has chosen, but also he should be adaptable to new social and cultural forms of global business interaction. Professional communication requires the ability to establish and develop new business contacts, to choose an adequate behavioral scenario, and involves not only mastering the language, but also the ability to perceive the social and cultural context of communicants [2].

Different authors have different suggestions concerning the question what kind of information should be taught at the lessons of a foreign language, but generally, all of them suggest examining more or less the same topics, depending on the language level of the students, which are proposed by Byram [1]. According to them, the content of cultural learning should cover the following areas of study:

- social identity and social groups
- social interaction
- belief and behavior
- socio-political institutions
- socialization and the life-cycle
- national history:

- national geography:
- national culture heritage

In deciding on the tasks best suited to meet our pedagogical objectives, we initially created the following checklist of essential attributes for any task, which should do all of the following:

- focus on interactional spoken communication
- involve practical language knowledge, including commonly used phrases and expressions
- allow for personal expression on the part of the learners
- be easily assessed
- be completed over one or two class sessions (not including preparatory work)
- expand learners' intercultural knowledge

To understand linguistic means and norms we should know the realities of the country, which language is being studied. In order to achieve understanding in intercultural communication, the communicator should not only speak certain languages, but also to be able to establish contact orientating on the partner national specifics, and to understand the interlocutor as a representative of a particular social group. Communication can only take place when the participants understand the values of another people through trust, sincerity and the desire to know each other.

The following exercises may be appropriate:

*1. You are staying in a German hotel. You wake up at 10:30 and decide to go downstairs to have breakfast. What difficulties might arise and how would you behave?*

*2. Your English friend came to visit your place. He has brought some food and you got offended. What would you do?*

*3. Read the information about socialization in Japan and Russia and answer the following questions: Does socialization in the given countries*

*differ greatly from that one in your country? Does it have anything in common?*

*In Japan, physical contact, such as hugging, kissing, holding hands, between persons of the opposite sex should be avoided. Young people, however, tend to be more demonstrative than elders, who frown upon it. It is considered good practice for people to sit erect with both feet on the floor.*

*In Russia, when female friends meet, they kiss on the cheek. When close male friends meet, they may pat each other on the back and hug. Only during greetings Russians display affection in public. Relatives and good friends will engage in an animated embrace and kiss each other on cheek. As for appointments, Russians are always late for them.*

Business English studying involves mastering of written communication etiquette. Positive result requires direct and systematic management of students learning activities. It is implemented in the teaching process and requires careful planning of the teacher's activity, in the defining of the educational content and the corresponding tasks and exercises [4].

Studying business e-mails and post-letter writing, students are offered a set of tasks that will provide an opportunity for students:

- to master the terminology of business communication in English;
- to learn the main features of business documents writing in English;
- to master scientific papers writing in English
- to improve the skills of oral and written communication.

To test the theoretical knowledge, we can offer the following exercises:

*1. Choose the right form of the greeting in the business letter:*

*a) Dear Ivan Ivanov   b) Dear Sirs,   c) Dear Madam!*

*2. Choose the wrong form of the ending phrase:*

*a) With love      b) Best wishes      c) Sincerely yours*

3. Choose the right form of the ending phrase:

a) Thanks a lot                      b) Your faithfully                      c) Kisses

4. Which form of the greeting cannot be used in the business letter:

a) Dear Madam                      b) Dear Miss White                      c) Dear Missis Olha

In order to form the intercultural competency of future specialists, at Business English lessons we use such modern methods of teaching as: discussion, debates, presentations and projects.

Work in a group requires thinking, direct participation in the achievement of the general educational goal. During this work students develop practical language skills and overcome linguistic barriers.

*Group discussion* increases motivation and personal engagement of participants in solving the discussed issues. They have to use not only the knowledge of a foreign language, but also the ability to formulate their own thoughts, find means to defend their positions. On the one hand, the discussion helps to develop lexical, grammatical, logical skills, on the other hand it encourages students to listen to the expressions, developing the listening skills.

Students should know that language is about communication and sometimes non-verbal language is more important than the spoken word. At Business English lessons students are taught to recognize common non-verbal gestures and their mean. There is a big chance of miscommunication if people use English words but continue using nonverbal gestures from their home culture.

Following task can be used:

*Determine which gestures are typical for America. Your partner will answer without words. Determine which gestures are different from those used in Ukraine.*

Yes. / No.

Come here.

*Go away!*

*I don't like that.*

*This is delicious!*

*Hello / Goodbye.*

*I don't know.*

*Debates* as a language competition is another approach in modern technologies of foreign language teaching. In the real communication, the monologue is vital, it plays a significant role in a successful business.

Thus, to improve students *presentation* skill for intercultural audience, following tasks can be proposed:

*Read the text carefully. Give advice about body language and the length of presentation for people who are going to make presentation for Ukrainian audience.*

*The language you use in a cross – cultural presentation is important. Although the majority of the language that is used in a cross cultural presentation will be understood by an English speaking foreign audience, a speaker must be careful when it comes to slang, idioms or phrases.*

*Pay attention to your body language in a cross cultural presentation, especially the use of gestures. The thumbs up may mean 'good' in the USA but it means something very different in Iran. Eye contact can also be a major intercultural difference.*

*Be aware of different approaches to time across cultures. Some cultures prefer a structured, timetabled approach to conducting business affairs, others are more casual.*

In addition, we consider that it is necessary to organize *project work* of students and ensure its effectiveness. Students are proposed to study specialized literature in English and to prepare essays, reports and papers which should be presented at Business English lessons.

At the first stage, the students are determined with the theme of their research, study literature; write a plan and the main theses of their reports.

At the second stage, the students present their completed work. Particular attention is drawn to the intercultural competency formation.

It is obviously that the formation of students intercultural competency is impossible without their own experience of communication and intercultural interaction. That is why, students are encouraged to participate in:

- meetings with lecturers of leading foreign universities and foreign businessmen;
- events, devoted to cultural traditions of foreigners;
- lectures held by leading experts in a foreign language teaching;
- competitions in texts writing;
- presentations of various cultural and academic exchange programs for students;
- consultations about job in international corporations;
- international programs of academic exchanges, internships, linguistic and work practices;
- extra-curriculum cultural activities in English.

**Results and discussion.** The idea is to enable students from diverse cultural backgrounds to embrace their distinct identities and discover new ideas, without pride or shame in their individual roots. The following factors play the leading role in students intercultural competency formation: the communicative orientation of the educational process; active speech-minded activity, the assimilation of cultural and behavioral norms adopted in other countries.

Understanding the value, uniqueness of language and culture of other people, and the similarity of key concepts of different cultures are key components of intercultural competency. They help students to understand



and recognize the multicultural world. It is more and more obvious that cultural differences play an important role in professional relationships and can significantly affect the cooperation. Tolerant attitude towards the representatives of other culture determine the position of the future specialist in intercultural communication. Intercultural competency helps to achieve positive results in solving professional problems at the international level.

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