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**THE WAYS OF FORMING FOREIGN STUDENTS'  
AWARENESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES  
FOR PROVIDING THEIR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING**

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The article examines the foreign students' awareness of the disagreements between their native culture and that of the country whose language they are learning. In particular, attention is paid to the necessity to encourage foreign students to form their awareness of the existing cross-cultural differences that might hinder successful communication with residents of the host country. The focus is on the intercultural abilities and skills formation required for the students to become effective users of a foreign language, sensitive to other cultures. The relevance of the article is determined by the challenge for foreign students to be adapted to Ukraine's socio-cultural conditions, which is a primary requirement of the ongoing globalization.

In the frameworks of teaching and learning foreign languages, special attention is paid to overcoming the problems arising in the sphere of intercultural communication, when the concepts of a host culture are interpreted by foreign students into their language. The article is also concentrated on the development of intercultural skills of students, which contribute to their becoming independent and effective users of modern foreign languages, sensitive to other cultures. Without adequate intercultural communication no success in international relations can be achieved. Any human interaction has a variety of aspects, including both ethical and business communication.

Nowadays there is an increased demand for students to have socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural skills rather than only professional competence. Awareness of other nations' values, and norms of behavior is an obligatory component of socio-cultural competence. The language of communication is known

to vary considerably depending on the context wherein it is used. Learners are to realize that speech activity is merely a part of the broader social context, which determines the overall meaning of utterances; in real life one being faced with varied situations that require flexibility of both language and verbal behavior.

In terms of the main goals of learning and teaching languages it is appropriate to identify personal, public, occupational, and educational domains. Meanwhile there appear numerous actual situations with simultaneous overlapping of all these areas. It is the personal domain that individualizes actions in other spheres. Practice has proved that the communicative potential of students, to a large extent, is affected by such factors as individual identity, personal values and motivation. We believe that the development of a sensitive intercultural personality must be regarded as an important educational goal.

**Key words:** academic mobility, foreign students, foreign environment, cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication.

**Волкова А.Г. Шляхи формування усвідомлення міжкультурних відмінностей в іноземних студентів для їх успішного навчання.** У статті розглядається питання усвідомлення іноземними студентами розбіжностей між рідною культурою та культурою країни, мова якої вивчається. Увага приділяється усвідомленню існування міжкультурних розбіжностей, які заважають успішній комунікації. Аналізується розвиток міжкультурних умінь та навичок, необхідних для становлення студентів як ефективних користувачів іноземної мови, чуттєвих до іншої культури. Актуальність статті обумовлена необхідністю адаптації студентів-іноземців до умов соціокультурного оточення в Україні, чого потребують сучасні процеси глобалізації.

**Ключові слова:** академічна мобільність, іноземні студенти, інокультурне середовище, культурна чуттєвість, міжкультурна комунікація.

**Волкова А.Г. Пути формирования осознания межкультурных различий у студентов-иностранцев для их успешного обучения.** В статье рассматривается вопрос осознания иностранными студентами различий между родной культурой и культурой страны изучаемого языка. Внимание уделяется осознанию существующих межкультурных различий, препятствующих успешной коммуникации. Анализируется развитие межкультурных умений и навыков, необходимых для становления студентов как эффективных пользователей иностранного языка, чувствительных к другой культуре. Актуальность статьи обусловлена необходимостью адаптации студентов-иностранцев к условиям социокультурного окружения в Украине, чого требуют современные процессы глобализации.

**Ключевые слова:** академическая мобильность, иностранные студенты, инокультурная среда, культурная чувствительность, межкультурная коммуникация.

**The theme relevance.** Due to significant changes in modern educational space with academic mobility becoming a reality, successful intercultural communication is increasingly coming to the fore. The lack of adequate intercultural communication skills, including academic and business ethics, makes it impossible to imagine advanced multi-faceted aspects inherent to successful international relations. All this justifies the relevance of the given article.

**The aim of the article** consists in proving the importance of working out the ways to form the students' awareness of cross-cultural differences between their own and host cultures in order to improve their successful training.

**Analysis of recent researches.** A wide spread orientation towards academic mobility demands the formation of not only students' professional competence but also their capacity for effective intercultural communication. We are considering the possibility of forming such skills through the prism of understanding the mental characteristics of different cultures carriers. Even people having a good command of the same language can not always adequately understand each other.

Thus, in the context of foreign language teaching one should focus on how to form the students' awareness of the differences between their native culture and the culture whose language they are learning. The importance of this issue is confirmed by contemporary researchers [2; 3; 4]. They consider the problem of adaptation of foreign students who come to study in Ukraine, describing the basic obstacles that interfere with the process of effective cross-cultural communication. Recommendations are provided for training, with advice being given to the teachers who work with foreign students and with the methodical literature pointed out [2]. Some researchers examine the issue of forming the personality's ability to effective cross-cultural communication as the means to understand mental features of different cultures, which can guarantee an effective dialogue of cultures in the modern world [3]. Genesis of concepts «intercultural communication» and «the world language picture» is investigated in scientific-pedagogical literature in examining the world language picture as a means of intercultural communication [4].

When foreign students come to Ukraine with the aim of obtaining education, they need to adapt to the specificities of our socio-cultural and educational environment. Also, a priority for these students is to acquire

knowledge about the values, behavior and other components of socio-cultural competence. It is known that in the course of communication, language varies considerably depending on the context in which it is used. We are faced with numerous situations that require verbal behavior flexibility. Students should always be aware that speech activity is part of a broader social context, with this very context revealing a complete meaning of the language. It is common knowledge that language varies greatly according to the requirements of the context of its usage. As stated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, each act of language use is set in the context of a particular situation within one of the domains in which social life is organised [7: 44]. Therefore, in learning and teaching languages it is desirable to identify personal, public, occupational, and educational spheres of action within social life organization. Therefore it is very much advisable for students to perform communicative tasks related to speech communication in different situations. The tasks may include providing personal information, as well as exchanging information about family, friends, household and other habits, participating in role-games, writing works for the conference, being involved in interviews with the aim of both obtaining and giving the information. The formed competences might be used as far as they are needed in a variety of contexts, depending on the conditions and requirements of different types of speech activity. The need and desire to communicate arise in a particular situation, with the form as well as the content of the communication acting as a response to that communicative situation [7: 45]. In real life, numerous communicative situations tend to cover more than one area simultaneously, when one sphere's elements penetrate into other spheres. No doubt, we should emphasize the significant role of a private sphere: being social agents, we above all recognize ourselves as individuals, which personalizes our involvement in other spheres of action.

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the «world of origin» and the «world of the target community» produce an intercultural awareness. It should be noted that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learners. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes.

Intercultural literacy depends on the awareness and understanding of the similarities and distinctive differences between «the world of origin» and «the world of the target community» [7: 103]. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, intercultural skills lead to the development of cultural sensitivity, whereby contributing to «the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture» and to deal effectively with overcoming cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflict situations [7: 105]. So, we should encourage the formation of the students' proper attitude to awareness of the relationship between their and host cultures.

We underline the crucial role of such a factor of students' intercultural competence as cultural sensitivity, i.e. knowledge that there are cultural differences and similarities among people, which can hardly ever be evaluated either positively or negatively. We believe that due to this very factor the ability to overcome stereotypes in intercultural relations can be formed.

As proved by practice, the students' communicative potential is influenced not only by their skills and knowledge, but to a large extent by such factors as individual identity, personal values and motivation. Students may have different levels of interest in new knowledge and openness to it. The development of so-called «intercultural identity», which includes both behavior and consciousness, is rightly regarded in many cases as an important educational goal [1; 5].

When studying at the University, foreign students can realize the existence of different social and cultural aspects of their new environment, such as traditions, values and cultural norms. We consider it essential to emphasize that students learn about intercultural differences and study intercultural communication both through direct communication and in the process of getting acquainted with literary works, mass media, etc. For example, because of respect to the teacher, it is not typical of Chinese students to ask questions in class even if there is something they do not understand. In this case it is necessary to explain the students that asking teachers in class is very much welcome as a part of an education process. Carefully selected educational texts concerning cultural values and codes of conduct, which are typical of a host culture contribute to the expansion of the life experience of learners, and as a result – to awareness of intercultural differences.

Learning about cultural diversity is also useful for a better knowledge of values, customs, morals and traditions of own culture. There is no doubt that «the more we learn about other cultures, the more we know about our own culture» [6: 10]. When in the classroom we discuss a text associated with national patterns of behavior, students may express their opinion on the problem under consideration, give examples of their own experience, discuss the issue related to universal ethics in society. By comparing behavior, traditions and other social and cultural aspects of their and host cultures, foreign students can make their own conclusions as to the differences in living within the scope of diverse fields of the native and new cultural environments. As a result, the audience can understand why people from the differing cultures behave in this or that way in particular circumstances. They also come to understand the existing differences in their value priorities better.

Having intercultural awareness contributes to obtaining intercultural skills. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Learning, these skills lead to the development of cultural sensitivity and the ability to adequately communicate with representatives of other cultures [7: 105].

Cross-cultural skills also include the ability to overcome a rigid stereotype behavior that exists despite the ongoing changes. It is worth mentioning here that by the term «stereotype» we understand both the language and behavior.

One of the problems that arise when dealing with representatives of other cultures is that it is not uncommon that some notions are translated from a foreign language through such lexical means which can hardly help to understand them. It can happen because of the lack of precise verbal equivalents to be used with the same meaning in any context.

As a matter of fact, to learn about the substantial differences in the use of the same term in different cultures is not only interesting, but useful. Culture can be compared to an iceberg: fundamental values, relationships, attitudes and ideas are predominately on the surface. Therefore, cultural differences might be ignored, for they are perceived as so-called «soft» invisible factors.

**Conclusion.** Contemporary students represent a new generation, whose life continues in terms of openness to the outside world. This fact gives grounds to argue that awareness of differences in norms, values, attitude

to what surrounds any person is completely necessary for adequate perception of modern life. Students are to be knowledgeable about the fact that disregard for awareness of intercultural differences has a negative impact on the success of any cross-cultural contacts.

Hence, the work in class with the aim of building students' awareness of intercultural differences can be a useful start in preparing students for their independent meetings with a new culture. It is known that a loss of social support might lead to depression, homesickness, alienation, and loneliness. If not addressed in time these may affect a student's ability to socialize and perform academically.

**Direction of further research.** Taking all above into consideration, we intend to work out a list of the underlying specificities of our culture to be practiced with students within a short period of time. We consider it to be one way of forming foreign students' awareness of differences between their and host cultures. It will help international students to get acquainted with the basic features of a new cultural environment as soon as possible, which is supposed to improve their self-confidence and satisfaction of the host country.

## LITERATURE

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