

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH TO NON-PHILOLOGICAL STUDENTS

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Abstract. *“No visa” status which Ukraine gained in June 2017 and perspectives of its further integration into European community drew more attention to cultural aspects of teaching professional English. It is proved that cultural differences of different nations are to be taken into consideration while studying or working in a foreign country. The problem of forming tolerant attitude towards unknown cultures in the process of teaching professional English to non-philological university students is in the centre of the research.*

Key words: *“No visa” status, cultural aspects, teaching professional English, non-philological students, tolerant attitude, cooperation, mutual understanding.*

Swift dynamics of social and cultural changes in Ukraine and its strong efforts to integrate into the European community forced our authorities to replace the obsolete paradigm in teaching – bringing up “an educated person” with a new paradigm in education – bringing up “a cultural and educated person”. It was caused by the necessity to prepare the young generation of Ukrainians for living and mutual understanding with Europeans. Having lived under “the iron curtain” during almost seventy years of the Soviet power Ukraine was isolated from the real communication with representatives of other nationalities. Common Ukrainians knew very little about the lifestyles, customs, traditions, values and beliefs of Europeans. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and gaining independence crowds of unemployed Ukrainians went abroad to European countries where they faced non-familiar manners of behavior, styles of everyday life, quite different priorities. Lack of culture prevented many our countrymen from getting well-paid job or occupation of high position.

Now when after numerous efforts Ukraine at last got “no visa” status more and more people go to Europe: to study, to get access to world and European values, to work and improve their life conditions. That is why the problem of knowledge of European norms of communicative behavior and tolerant attitude towards new cultural traditions is one of the most important nowadays.

The problems of learning foreign cultures and forming skills of communication with foreigners were researched by many scientists: V.Bibler, Ye.Passov, V.Safonova, G.Tomakhin in Russia were preoccupied with the dialogue of cultures. Scientific works of Ukrainian scholars R.Gryshkova,

N.Samoylenko, L. Morska were dedicated to the problem of forming social and cultural competence of non-philological students in the process of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP). O.Tarnopolsky and S.Kozhushko draw attention of the scientific community to the cultural aspects of teaching business English. But now having got “no visa” status Ukrainian students need more knowledge about Europeans who have become closer to us and are ready to collaborate with us.

The best way to influence students in forming their own attitude towards representatives of other cultures with whom they will communicate in Europe is to learn not only a foreign language at the university but to “learn language through culture and culture through language” [1].

So *the aim of this article* is to highlight some questions of forming tolerant attitude towards unknown cultures in the process of teaching professional English to non-philological university students.

To educate positively thinking and success-oriented young Ukrainians able to solve life problems peacefully and in a cultural way is one of the main tasks of higher school. Learning foreign languages should help young people better understand priorities and life values of other nations and form a tolerant attitude towards other peoples’ customs, beliefs and communicative behavior.

In Ukraine the strategy of teaching foreign languages was formulated by G. Kryuchkov who represents Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. This strategy is based on the following general principles:

- humanistic perspective of learning foreign languages which supposes comprehension of peace as the main world value, support of international mutual understanding, development of a person’s scientific, cultural & educational potential;
- constant language self-perfection;
- language is the best instrument for communication & intellectual development of a personality;
- holistic approach to teaching languages in order to better understand different peoples & their cultures [2].

The fact is that teaching foreign languages differs from teaching other academic subjects because the main goal here is not storing & summarizing knowledge but teaching students to communicate in a foreign language. Cultural peculiarities of both languages are to be taken into consideration because they help to better understand native speakers.

Teaching ESP is based on the same didactic & methodical principles as teaching general English: *visuality, capability, activity, comprehension, scientific approach, strength of knowledge, individualization, accessibility, systematic and successiveness, problematic and developing teaching.* In modern didactics such principles are becoming more and more important: *activity,*

creativity, individualization, meaningfulness, problematic and developing teaching.

Methodical principles of teaching professional English are slightly different:

- practicing students in reading original professionally oriented texts and discussing professional situations close to real life;
- proper understanding and usage of language everyday phrases, patterns of addressing, apologizing, asking for something etc;
- communicativeness;
- dominant role of exercises;
- interconnected teaching of different kinds of speech activity (listening, speaking, writing and reading);
- taking into account students' native language;
- contextual approach;
- internationalism and variability;
- paying special attention to cultural differences.

All these principles should be taken into consideration in order to reach adequacy of understanding while communicating. Students' tolerant attitudes and willingness for mutual cooperation with native speakers should be constantly developing.

The main role in forming students' cultural competence in a foreign language belongs to an English teacher and available educational environment. Ukrainian methodologist O.Zabolotska considers that "professional competence of a foreign language teacher the basis of which is formed by integrated knowledge and skills in professionally oriented academic disciplines, deeps with its roots into the culture of the country the language of which is learned as well as into the native culture" [3].

As it is mentioned in the Curriculum of the English Language for Professional Communication (2005) in order to pay more attention to cultural aspects at the English classes it is necessary to change the approach to teaching a foreign language and come from the traditional factual approach to culture one [5]. It supposes that most part of the class-time should be devoted not to learning grammar rules or retelling of texts but to forming practical skills of communication on professional subjects.

Valuable attitude to cultural differences can be regarded as the way of forming critical thinking and other "life skills": communication, creativity, collaboration. These skills being a component of a competence approach to teaching English together with additional knowledge about culture of foreign countries help to build "bridges" between different countries and strengthen peaceful relationships among nations.

Comparative technology when cultural phenomena of our country are compared with the corresponding phenomena in other countries and in this way help forming cultural competence, is rather useful at English classes. It allows to draw students' attention not only to facts of foreign cultures but also to develop interest to our native culture. Very often learning cultural phenomena in other countries students begin to better understand the roots of our native culture and become experts in Ukrainian customs, traditions, national values. Take for example the revival of habit to wear "vyshyvanka" (Ukrainian folk embroidery shirt) on national holidays. It helps to unite the nation and revive its glorious history and national glory.

One of the drawbacks of ESP teaching at non-philological specialties is connected with the fact that most English teachers being themselves graduates of philological faculties bring to their class-room the same methods of teaching as they were taught at the university. They ignore the fact that students of non-philological specialties entered the university to learn the target future profession and the English language for most of them is a humanitarian subject just like history or philosophy. If a young English teacher makes her students learn too much theoretical grammar or read and translate too complicated texts they lose their interest to broadening knowledge and mastering skills of speech. To make English classes more interesting and useful it is necessary to pay more attention to cultural aspects of the covered materials. To attract students' attention towards cultural differences in many countries various games can be played and projects with presentations of different nations can be prepared as well as round-table discussions, simulations etc. The main idea is to involve all students to work in class and participate in group work.

Dialogues should prevail at the English classes and the topics for discussion should be close to real life situations. Practice shows that usually people have very few chances to "deliver" monologues in the process of international communication. More often they are partners in dialogues, and the rules of conversation are to be kept.

In conclusion we would like to note that in our constantly changing world it is necessary to use all possibilities of cultural aspects of ESP course in order to bring different peoples closer to each other and educate tolerant, ready for international cooperation young generation of Ukrainians.

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