

FOREIGN LANGUAGES FACULTY STUDENTS' LINGUOCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract. *The present study aimed to examine the effect of series of additional tasks to the course "Country study" on the linguocultural competence development of the foreign languages faculty students'. The quasi-experimental approach was used. Participants consisted of 52 students of "Country Study" course in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. Data collection tool was an academic achievement test. Results showed that the suggested series of additional tasks had a significant effect on the students' academic achievements. In light of this we recommend these tasks usage in the "Country Study" course.*

Keywords: *linguocultural competence, linguocultural approach, country study, academic achievement*

Globalization and integration in every sphere of life: social, economic and political actualized the problem of single educational space formation. The renewed educational system should promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence of the representatives of different nations that will help young people understand and respect different cultures. That's why the linguocultural aspect of teaching is becoming one of the main priorities; especially it concerns foreign languages teaching.

In our country information about another country learnt in the process of language studies is usually called Country Study, in Germany it is called Culture study (*Kulturkunde*), in American schools there are Language and Area courses, in France – Language and Civilization (*langue et civilization*), in Britain the term Linguocultural studies is used. The linguocultural approach to foreign language teaching aims at formation and development of students' linguocultural competence. The term linguocultural competence is defined by a number of scholars (O. O. Bihych, N. Brazhnyk, S. Haponova, H. Hrynyuk, S. Nikolayeva, T. Oliynyk, K. Onyshchenko, O. Petrashchuk and others) as knowledge about the peculiarities of verbal and non-verbal behavior of the native speakers in the certain situations of communication, that means the holistic system of national-and-cultural concepts formation.

The objective of our research was to develop a series of additional tasks on the basis of authentic materials aimed at foreign languages faculty students' linguocultural competence development; to conduct a pilot study in order to test the effectiveness of their usage.

Participants in the present study consisted of 52 students who were enrolled in two equal groups of “Country Study” course in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. One of these groups was assigned as a control group and was taught according to the regular course programme while the other one represented the experimental group, studied the course programme and got the series of the additional tasks to be fulfilled during the practical lessons.

Defining the selection criteria for the linguocultural educational material Ye. Vereshchagin and V. Kostomarov point out that “it should reflect the contemporary British reality in its typical situations” [3, p.116]. So the texts, suggested for course study should meet the following requirements:

- be authentic (written by native speakers and published in contexts designed specifically for native-speaker consumption, with no thought given to non-native accessibility);
- be relevant (to reflect the present-day stage of the communicants’ social interaction);
- be typical (to represent the standardized language patterns regularly reproduced in regularly recurring communicative situations).

While selecting the authentic language material we followed the I. Leif recommendations, according to which it should meet the certain demands:

- adequacy to the cultural reality;
- thematic “marking”;
- information density;
- correlation to the life and language experience of the students [2].

We used two types of texts (according to the classification suggested by G. Voronyina [4]:

- 1) functional texts performing instructive, illustrative, promotional or preventive functions (signposts, signboards, billboards, diagrams, charts, figures, theatrical bills etc.;
- 2) informative texts (articles, interviews, polls, readers’ letters, announcements, advertisements, statistical information, reviews etc.).

Background knowledge, culture-specific vocabulary and linguistic realities constitute the basics of the linguocultural competence. In the process of additional tasks working out we relied upon the classification of the background knowledge to be mastered for the successful communication in the situations of the intercultural communication, suggested by H. Hammerly [1]:

- 1) informational culture: knowledge of history, geography, general information known by a typical representative of the society. We suggested the text “Windsor Castle” and multiple choice test to check the understanding of the text;

- 2) behavioral culture: the peculiarities of the relations in society, rules of behavior, conversational formulas, sign language. We suggested the text “Cooking at school” and the exercise “Choose the best answer”;
- 3) traditional culture: fine arts, literature. After listening to the quotes from the authentic novels the students should have guessed the title and the author;
- 4) historical-and-cultural background: cultural phenomena in the diachronic aspect. We suggested the text about the introduction of the voting rights for women in Britain, followed by the discussion of the changes in the social roles of men and women over the past 100 years in Britain and in our country;
- 5) the samples of cultural behavior study. We discussed business etiquette in Britain compared with that in our country;
- 6) the main stereotypes. We discussed typical British, American and Ukrainian characters;
- 7) everyday life realities study. We worked on the texts “Marks & Spencer” – Britain’s favourite store, London Streets and their names, abstract from the Rip Van Winkle by W. Irving etc.

Besides the abovementioned we also suggested the tasks aimed at the students’ communicative competence, creative imagination in communicative activity development, students' thinking stimulation (e.g. lesson-excursion).

The study used quasi-experimental approach to check the effect of the suggested series of additional tasks on the students’ academic achievements I the course “Country study”. The academic achievement pre- and post-tests were taken by both groups. All the participants of the experiment sat for an achievement pre-test at the beginning of the course. It was done to make sure of their homogeneity as to academic achievement and background knowledge. There was no significant difference in the results of both groups. The results are presented in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Academic achievements pre-test results of the control group

Level	Number of students	Percentage
High level	12	23%
Middle level	36	69%
Low level	4	8%

Table 2. Academic achievements pre-test results of the experimental group

Level	Number of students	Percentage
High level	13	25%

Middle level	34	65%
Low level	5	10%

On completion of the experiment the academic achievement post-test was employed for both groups and we obtained the following results:

Table 3. Academic achievements post-test results of the control group

Level	Number of students	Percentage
High level	14	27%
Middle level	34	65%
Low level	4	8%

Table 4. Academic achievements post-test results of the experimental group

Level	Number of students	Percentage
High level	21	40%
Middle level	29	56%
Low level	2	4%

As illustrated in the tables 1 and 3, there is no significant difference in the results of the academic achievement pre and posttests in the control group:

1. High level: 12students (23 %) in the pretest versus 14 students (27%) in the posttest;
2. Middle level: 36 students (69 %) in the pretest versus 34 students (65%) in the posttest;
3. Low level: 4 students (8 %) in the pretest versus 4 students (8%) in the posttest.

While the results of the pre and posttest in the experimental group differ considerably:

1. High level: 13 students (25 %) in the pretest versus 21 students (27%) in the posttest;
2. Middle level: 36 students (69 %) in the pretest versus 29 students (56%) in the posttest;
3. Low level: 5 students (10 %) in the pretest versus 2 students (4%) in the posttest.

The difference between the results of the academic achievement posttest of the control and the experimental groups is presented in table 5.

Table 5. The difference between the participants' academic achievement posttest results

	Number of students in the control group	Percentage (control group)	Number of students in the experimental group	Percentage (experimental group)
High level	14	27%	21	40%
Middle level	34	65%	29	56%
Low level	4	8%	2	4%

Conclusions. So, there is significant difference between the academic achievements of both participant groups in favour of the experimental group that was taught via a series of additional tasks. Analysis of the obtained results showed that the usage of the series of additional tasks to the Country Study course was more effective than the use of conventional materials. In other words, experimental group students' understanding and comprehension of the course proved to be much better than that of the control group students. In the light of the results of the present study the series of additional tasks to the Country study course can be recommended to be used in the educational process.

References translated and transliterated

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