

UDC 37.018.43.016:796]:004

DOI 10.12958/2227-2844-2024-2(361)-133-137

Fedicheva Nataliya Volodymyrivna,

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,

Associate Professor

of the Department of Oriental Philology and Translation of the

State Institution «Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University»,

Poltava, Ukraine.

nvfedicheva@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8012-5636>

Krysalo Olha Viktorivna,

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor of the Department of Oriental Philology and Translation

State Institution «Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University»,

Poltava, Ukraine.

olga.krysalo@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8777-7039>

THE TEACHING OF CULTURAL AWARENESS AS A SKILL

For many years, numerous language educators have advocated for incorporating a cultural component in teaching English as a foreign language (Brown, 2007; Byram, 2009; Cakir, 2016; Galloway, 1999; Grishkova, 2011). This cultural component fosters international understanding, enhances comprehension of one's own culture, and motivates learners to excel in English. M. Byram characterizes the language teacher's role as "a professional mediator between a student and foreign languages and cultures" (Byram, 2009, p. 58). Research on teaching with a focus on cultural understanding has been conducted by many educators from Ukraine, Britain, Turkey, and the United States (Grishkova, 2011; Richard-Amado, 2009; Lafayette, 2007; Hadley, 1998; Cakir, 2016; Omaggio, 2006). Most of them recognize that language and culture are intertwined. As D. Brown noted in 2007, "Whenever we teach a language, we also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting" (D. Brown, 2007, p. 64). Also, teachers of foreign languages understand that merely learning the linguistic system does not guarantee successful cross-cultural communication. Students and language learners alike have come to appreciate the importance of valuing other cultures in the global context.

The authors of the article have been interested in the issue of teaching for cultural understanding for an extended period and have devoted several of their publications to this problem. We really realize the importance of developing cultural competence when teaching and learning any foreign language. This article aims to: highlight various challenges educators encounter when teaching for cultural understanding; advocate for teaching cultural awareness as a skill; emphasize the importance of integrating students' own culture into English language teaching; and provide suggestions for embedding cultural objectives into a proficiency-oriented curriculum. To clarify these points, we will draw on our own research findings and data gathered through surveys and classroom observations in English language teaching contexts.

We believe that the reasons language courses often exclude a systematic study of culture include: many teachers lack training in teaching cultural content and are unaware of various approaches to

fostering cultural understanding; high-quality authentic materials are not always accessible; defining culture poses challenges in instructional design; teachers may lack substantial firsthand knowledge of the cultures they teach; incorporating cultural studies requires additional time that many school and university instructors cannot allocate; and cultural materials are inconsistently covered in textbooks.

In 2023 we conducted the questionnaire surveys among one hundred first and second year students of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University. We found out that nearly 86% of students realize the benefits of learning about another cultures. All of them understand that the study of culture is a very important aspect of language learning yet at the same time they mention that cultural teaching is insubstantial and sometimes it is sporadic. Why is this so? – This is the question we posed to ourselves. One possible reason is that some teachers prefer using a “facts-only” approach to culture. However, we believe that teachers should mainly help students develop the skills necessary to interpret the facts they discover about the target culture. Educators emphasize that the goals of cross-cultural understanding involve processes rather than mere facts (Galloway, 1999; Seelye, 2007; Hadley, 1998; Smith, 2007; McKay, 2009). According to Seeley, facts are cheap and “meaningless until interpreted within a problem-solving context” (Seeley, 2007, p. 3). A. Hadley notes that the “facts only” approach is “destined to be ineffective” (Hadley, 1998, p. 358). Numerous scholars have criticized the focus on “facts” in cultural education. From our own experiences, we realize that simply accumulating facts can reinforce stereotypes and leave students unprepared for unfamiliar cultural situations. Therefore, we advocate for teaching cultural awareness as a skill rather than just imparting cultural information. We strongly believe that teachers of English as a foreign language should equip students with tools to process new cultural experiences in a way that enhances their understanding. Educators should develop and implement assignments and techniques that train students to be keen observers of culturally appropriate behaviors and expressions. These routines and expressions can serve as the foundation for engaging and effective activities that motivate and interest students.

In our opinion, we still do not have a framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes. Many English language teachers realize the importance of teaching for cross-cultural understanding, but they get stuck in when it comes to determining goal statements, deciding what aspects of culture to teach, what activities to use and what teaching material to prepare. A scheme is needed that would help teachers select appropriate cultural materials and serve as a helpful resource for planning cultural instruction and designing cultural activities. For educational purposes we have designed a scheme which consists of the following four objectives. 1. Factual objectives: students are able to demonstrate knowledge of formal or “high” culture, as well as knowledge of everyday or “popular” culture. They can explain major historical events, major institutions, and major artistic accomplishments. 2. Affective objectives: students are able to value different nationalities, attitudes and values. 3. Process objectives: students are able to locate and organize information about different cultures as well as evaluate the validity of statements about culture. 4. Pragmatic objectives: students are able to pay careful attention to politeness routines, expressions, and phrases that are used by speakers and then identify the cultural reasons for the use of these language devices. Students learn to act appropriately in common everyday situations, and use appropriate gestures and body language.

The scheme can be helpful in clarifying themes and topics that need to be integrated into classroom instruction and used while selecting teaching materials. It can also give teachers some ideas about what strategies and techniques to use in a way that truly integrates culture with language study.

We would like to propose several techniques for infusing cultural goals into proficiency-oriented curriculum. First technique is called culture capsules. It is a description of one minimal difference between a language learner’s culture and a target-culture, accompanied by pictures, photos, slides, or objects. In the classroom, students can perform role-plays based on various capsules.

Second technique is called an intercultural connection. It is a very short situation that describes the symbolic meanings, artistic dimension and cultural values of a target-language country. Students

are supposed to work in pairs or in small groups and discuss the situation or create and present conversations based on the situation.

Next technique includes a story about a cross-cultural miscommunication with a subsequent set of questions. Having read the story, students will be asked to choose the best interpretation of the characters' actions based on their knowledge of the characters' cultures. As in real life situations, there might be more than one explanation that can be considered appropriate or correct. Students then discuss their options in small groups. The technique is called a critical incident and it should be based on real-life experiences. Critical incidents are sometimes defined as culture mini-dramas.

Conclusions. Though a long-time researched issue, culture is still a weak component in some curricula. Teachers of English might have problems when they try to include culture elements in their language teaching. At the same time they realize that incorporating culture into language teaching would contribute significantly to developing students' practical English skills, building their awareness and facilitating cross-cultural communication. In the article we have proposed the teaching of cultural awareness as a skill as opposed to teaching mostly cultural information. We have suggested a framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes, which consists of four objectives. The framework can serve as a useful resource for teachers as they plan cultural instruction, design cultural activities and create teaching materials of their own. We have also argued that local culture should be taught together with the target one and suggested ways of these goals can be infused into a proficiency-oriented curriculum. The suggested techniques truly integrate culture with language study and are interesting and hopefully enjoyable for students. Also, they develop students as international citizens of the world and at the same time teach culture together with speaking, listening and reading, thus representing the connections between language and culture.

References

1. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Pearson Education; 3rd edition, 586 p.
2. Byram, M. S. (2009). *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
3. Cakir, I. (2016). Developing Cultural Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching. *Turkish Online Journal of Distant Education – TOJDE*, 7(3), Art. 12.
4. Galloway, V. D. (1999). *Communicating in a Culture*. ACTFL Master Lecture Series, Monterey, CA: Defense Language Institute.
5. Grishkova, R. (2011). Social and cultural hindrances to the formation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence. *Philology series*, 89(2), 169–172.
6. Hadley, A. (1998). *Teaching Language in Context*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
7. Lafayette, R. (2007). Integrating the teaching of Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom. Singer man, ed., *Toward a New integration of Language and Culture*. Middlebury, VT: Northeast Conference.
8. McKay, S. (2009). Western Culture and the Teaching of English as an International Language. *Forum*, 42(2), 10–15.
9. Omaggio, H. A. (2006). *Teaching Language in Context*. Heinle and Heinle.
10. Richard-Amato, A. P. (2009). *Making It Happen*. Longman.
11. Scollon, R. (2012). *Intercultural Communication. A Discourse Approach* [2nd ed.]. Blackwell Publishers. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0555>
12. Seeley, H. N. (2007). *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*. Lincolnwood: National textbook Company.
13. Smith, L. (2004). English as an international auxiliary language. *RELC Journal*, 7(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368827600700205>

Список використаної літератури

1. Brown H. D. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, Pearson Education; 3rd edition, 2007. 586 p.
2. Byram M. S. *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2009.
3. Cakir I. Developing Cultural Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching. *Turkish Online Journal of Distant Education – TOJDE*. 2016. Vol. 7. Issue 3. Article 12.
4. Galloway V. D. *Communicating in a Culture*. ACTFL Master Lecture Series, Monterey, CA: Defense Language Institute, 1999.
5. Grishkova R. Social and cultural hindrances to the formation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence. *Philology series*. 2011. Vol. 89(2). P. 169–172.
6. Hadley A. *Teaching Language in Context*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1998.
7. Lafayette R. Integrating the teaching of Culture into the Foreign Language Classroom Singer man, ed., *Toward a New integration of Language and Culture*. Middlebury, VT: Northeast Conference, 2007.
8. McKay S. Western Culture and the Teaching of English as an International Language. *Forum*. 2009. Vol. 42. Issue 2. P. 10–15.
9. Omaggio, H. A. *Teaching Language in Context*. Henie and Heine, 2006.
10. Richard-Amato A. P. *Making It Happen*. Longman, 2009.
11. Scollon R. *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach* [2nd ed.], Blackwell Publishers, 2012. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0555>
12. Seeley H. N. *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, Lincolnwood: National textbook Company, 2007.
13. Smith L. English as an international auxiliary language. *RELC Journal*. 2004. Vol. 7(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368827600700205>

Fedicheva N., Krysallo O. The teaching of cultural awareness as a skill

The article discusses the inseparability of culture and language teaching and explores some problems that teachers of English as a foreign language face. Incorporating culture into language teaching contributes significantly to developing students' practical English skills, building their awareness and facilitating cross-cultural communication. The article argues in favor of teaching of cultural awareness as a skill, as opposed to teaching cultural information. It also emphasizes the importance of integrating students' own culture into English language teaching; The data that the authors have collected by conducting surveys among one hundred first and second year students of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University are presented. The authors of the article have suggested a framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes. The framework consists of four objectives and can serve as a useful resource for teachers as they plan cultural instruction and design cultural activities or create their own teaching materials. The article argues that local culture should be taught together with the target one and suggests ways of how cultural goals can be infused into a proficiency-oriented curriculum. The suggested techniques integrate culture with language study and are interesting and enjoyable for students. Ideas on how to infuse cultural goals into language teaching are offered. Explanations of culture capsules, intercultural connections, and critical incidents are given in the article.

Key words: a cultural component, students' own culture, a scheme, local culture, cultural activities.

Федічева Н. В., Крисало О. В. Навчання культурної свідомості як навички

У статті розглядається нерозривність навчання культури і мови та досліджуються проблеми, з якими стикаються вчителі англійської мови як іноземної. Включення культури у викладання мови значною мірою сприяє розвитку практичних навичок англійської мови студентів, підви-

щенню їхньої обізнаності та міжкультурному спілкуванню. У статті наводиться аргумент на користь викладання культурної обізнаності як навички на відміну від викладання лише фактичної інформації. Підкреслюється важливість інтеграції власної культури студентів у викладання англійської мови. Наведено дані, зібрані авторами шляхом опитування студентів першого та другого курсів Луганського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Автори статті запропонували структуру для організації навчання навколо культурних тем. Структура складається з чотирьох цілей і може служити корисним ресурсом для вчителів, які планують навчання, розробляють культурні активності або створюють власні навчальні матеріали. У статті стверджується, що місцеву культуру слід викладати разом із цільовою, і пропонуються шляхи того, як культурні цілі можна влити в навчальний план. Запропоновані підходи поєднують культуру з вивченням мови та є цікавими і приємними для студентів. Пропонуються ідеї щодо того, як влити культурні цілі у викладання мови. У статті подано пояснення культурних капсул, міжкультурних зв'язків та критичних подій.

Ключові слова: культурний компонент, культурна обізнаність як навичка, власна культура студентів, структура, локальна культура, культурні техніки.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International (CC BY 4.0)



Стаття надійшла до редакції 25.05.2024 р.
Прийнято до друку 31.05.2024 р.