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EFFECTIVE TYPES OF ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN LEARNERS IN ELT CLASSROOM

The paper deals with teaching foreign languages and reveals that it does not include only linguistic competence, performance or verbal communication but intercultural awareness and skills as well, awareness of how culture and identity are constructed socially. Moreover, the outcomes behind learning the foreign language are not only the matter of acquiring this language but also helps the learners acquire knowledge, skills, culture and values that can be used in their lives beyond the classroom. The purpose of the article is to highlight on how English language teaching (ELT) assist students to transfer awareness, culture and values outside an English lesson to have an impact on ways of thinking and consequently the view of life, regarding that the language teaching system should inspire learners to explore, think and understand the world around them through learning the foreign language.

Research also calls for significant attention to intercultural communication in English language teaching and it emphasizes the increasingly important role of activities in ELT in order to develop learners' communicative awareness and intercultural competence. Culture study has to be completely integrated into the English classroom. The opportunities should be created for a teacher and learners to examine and reflect on the English culture and of their own country. Incorporating the strategies and activities discussed in the article is a great beginning to help the learners become more aware culturally. The outlined activities are by no means an exhaustive list. They are simply suggestions that the teachers can adapt and

expand to raise learners' awareness and understanding of the English culture and to help students become intercultural competent. Teachers of English may use these examples and similar activities to make explicit cultural features associated with English. The authors can safely recommend that while teaching linguistic skills, the teachers of English should integrate a variety of cultural elements in the English classroom.

Keywords: culture; intercultural awareness; intercultural competence; intercultural communication; English language teaching; activities, strategies.

Statement of the problem. In the last decades many foreign language teachers, educators and researchers have expressed the belief that the main aim of second and foreign language acquisition is to enable learners to communicate with people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in a multicultural world. Since there is an increasing need to deal with cultural diversity effectively and appropriately, students need to acquire intercultural competence as well.

The specificity of the subject "Foreign language" presupposes the acquisition of communicative awareness by students as communication in a foreign language. In the modern world, children get acquainted with the world cultural fund almost simultaneous-

ly with their native ones (the Internet, foreign films, music, media and just relaxing with their parents at a foreign resort), and this makes it obvious that intercultural awareness is an integral part of communicative competence.

Therefore, the relevance of this study is that it focuses on the problem of intercultural awareness development in schools, which fully complies with the new native educational standards, which are now entering into force in all Ukrainian schools.

Analysis of research and publications.

The problem of intercultural awareness as a core component of intercultural competence is the subject of numerous studies conducted by many researchers considered it from different aspects. Helena Maria Araújo E Sá and Melo Sivia considered ELT to be about diversity and with mutable needs and aims [1, p. 7]. According to M. Byram foreign language learning is to be involved the development of learner's critical, cultural and linguistic awareness [2, p. 35]. Regarding the well-developed model by M. Byram (1997), intercultural communicative competence requires the particular attitudes, knowledge and skills adding linguistic, discourse and sociolinguistic competence. Attitudes comprise curiosity and openness and also readiness to see other cultures and speakers' own without being judgmental [3, p. 51]. M. Hammer, M. Bennet and R. Wiseman (2003) made an attempt to overcome some of the murkiness of intercultural communicative competence definitions by drawing the main distinction between *intercultural competence* and *intercultural sensitivity* [4, p. 422]. According to A. Fantini (2006), in its broadest sense intercultural competence can be defined as "a complex of abilities needed to perform *effectively* and *appropriately* when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" [5, p. 12]. Fantini highlights commonly used attributes for description of an intercultural speaker – curiosity, empathy, interest, flexibility, respect, motivation, openness, patience, a sense of humor, tolerance for ambiguity and willingness to suspend judgment (Fantini, 6: 89). Ruben (1989) declared the "need for conceptual clarity", a variety of frameworks and approaches to define and assess intercultural competence persists nowadays. Therefore, despite the broad number of models and theories provides foreign language teachers and educators with a various number of approaches to understand and investigate intercultural awareness and competence, it complexifies the task of communicating about related ideas in a systematic and consistently interpretable ways as well (Ruben,

7: 234). The Council of Europe's "Common European Framework of Reference" together with the innovations focuses on importance of intercultural awareness, intercultural skills and existential competence in foreign language teaching. These references describe the importance of intercultural dimension believing that "language learners who, thus, become 'intercultural speakers' will be successful not only in communicating information but also in developing a human relationship with people of other languages and cultures" (Common European Framework of Reference, 8: 4).

The aim of the article is to analyze the concept of intercultural awareness as an integral part of intercultural competence, as well as to establish the basic principles and strategies for intercultural awareness development in learners at English lessons.

Presentation of the main material.

Teaching of culture is not limited to transmission the information about individuals of the target culture and their overall attitudes as traditional opinion in ELT suggests. Instead pointing out the models by Byram and Fantini, have been already stated, teachers of English should be concerned with the next purposes: to assist the learners see the relationships between their home and other cultures; to help the learners acquire curiosity and interest in 'otherness', the awareness of themselves and own culture seen from the other individual's perspectives; to help the learners understand how the intercultural interaction occurs; how the social identities are the part of an interaction; how the learners' perceptions of other individuals and their perceptions influence communication success; how the learners may find out more about the individuals who they communicate with.

To achieve the mentioned above purposes teachers of English should attempt to design the suitable activities which can prepare the English language learners for communication with the open minds with other intercultural speakers and the tolerate differences.

The final dimension in Paige's model of culture learning deals with the specific strategies for becoming more culturally competent. These strategies comprise learners' awareness about the culture from home informants and via the authentic materials which are associated with this culture, the development of their cultural observation skills. English language teachers should provide learners with the opportunities to investigate and recognize the cultural differences. It means raise their awareness not of the target culture but also their own one.

M. Byram (1997) emphasizes that individuals that are “intercultural competent” have a great understanding of the own culture and how it has shaped them and connect between how cultural components display in behavior through the cultures. According to the author, the intercultural competence comprises the following characteristics:

- curiosity and openness to another culture;
- understanding of the social practice and products in both one’s own culture and the target culture;
- the ability to relate something from the other cultures and make it understandable to the members of own one;
- the ability to apply new knowledge about the cultures in the authentic situations;
- the ability to estimate critically cultural practice and products of an individual’s own culture and of other countries.

Teachers of English trying to help the learners become intercultural competent may design the ‘cultural friendly’ classroom. To do it the following strategies are described in the next paragraphs.

Cultural collections. One of the ways to foster a curiosity and openness to English-speaking cultures is to establish the ‘collection’ of cultural information in various formats. They can be the popular films, literature, music, online websites and everyday products such as currency, menus, musical instruments, stamps, toys, travel brochures, magazines and newspapers from English-speaking countries or from a certain country depending on the learners’ needs and the course purposes. Suggesting learners to listen to, smell, see, touch and use ‘real’ things from the various cultures, we may connect the concepts beyond the ideas and help learners understand life realities in the particular cultures. It is one thing to describe learners how Halloween is celebrated in the USA, but another thing to imagine how excited they would be to put on ghoulish costumes when bobbing for the apples and carving jack-o-lanterns.

The authentic materials are rich sources for a number of activities and tasks which increase awareness of the target culture. Learners can investigate the target culture and report to a class on the specific components or features. Students can ask questions and compare insights to identify the cultural patterns and expand the whole classroom’s overall understanding of English-speaking cultures. For the descriptive writing task the learners can depict the items from a collection or they can classify the items by using, function or the criteria of their own choice. To in courage the higher order think-

ing the teacher can ask the learners how artifacts fit into the level of the ‘cultural iceberg’. Meanwhile the teacher can heighten learners’ awareness of the own culture asking them to bring the authentic materials to the classroom and then using the English language depict items and describe how they ‘represent’ learners’ culture.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the teachers should identify certain purposes that they believe to achieve while incorporating cultures into their classes and use the artifacts from the ‘collections’ for creating the particular lesson plans to achieve their objectives.

Web quests. In the classroom with the reliable Internet connection and access to the computers a web quest is a great way to heighten cultural awareness. The teachers of English can design their own cultural awareness web quests following the next directions:

(1) Despite of what culture aspects you would like the learners to investigate. Take the in-class learners’ survey or give them the directed tasks which can comprise the following topics: etiquette and manners; food and cuisine; religion; music; customs and traditions; clothes and costumes; games and leisure.

The issue is not just gather information and make the reports but think and connect on how the information may lead to solid understanding of a culture under study: Why do people do the things they do?

(2) As facilitators teachers should conduct the study on sites available for themes they choose. Keep in mind that not all Internet sites are appropriate. If you assign the links, be sure that they are active.

(3) Familiarize with how to navigate sites and identify types of information teachers believe their learners will find.

(4) Design the questions which direct the learners to the different websites. A teacher can wish to have the learners design their own questions. The sample questions are the following:

– What traditional dishes are cooked in the USA at Thanksgiving and what is the history of them?

– What are popular sports in Australia and how do they reflect the culture of this country?

– How is the government structured in Great Britain?

– What is a typical day at school like for the students in Canada and how is it different from yours?

(a) Have the learners work in pairs or small groups to collect information.

(b) Learners present the findings to their class. While the simple oral report may be informative the learners can as well:

- create the skit incorporating costumes, food and milk of the cultures that they demonstrate;

- use PowerPoint or other programmes which contain the pictures or video clips, e.g. from YouTube or other sources, to demonstrate the aspects of a culture they feel is important;

- make collages or posters demonstrating the aspects of the target culture;

- brainstorm the own ideas about types of the presentations learners would like to give and consult with a teacher to approve.

These assignments develop the learners' cultural observation skills tying the concepts to the real world materials. Besides a cultural awareness value the tasks suggest many opportunities for learners to develop the skills of English. The learners may focus on vocabulary building, for instance, or working on certain skills such as skimming, scanning, note taking and summarizing.

Cultural 'informants'. Another strategy is to invite the native speakers or proficient non-native speakers of the English language to come to classroom and speak on a particular aspect of own cultures. The 'informants' can be resources for confirmation or disconfirmation of the ideas, impressions or textbook information which a student has learned. The learners can prepare the questions in advance of the visitor's arrival. When it can be interesting to know if foreigners in their own country like the local dishes or a sports team, more profitable questions would revolve around how behavior can vary across the culture:

- Is it OK in your country to _____?
- Why do people in your country _____?

It is a possibility for learners to teach a guest about their culture or respond the questions about it as well.

Ideally it would be the variety of the informants to avoid getting opinions of the only social class, gender or ethnic group. It is important that the speakers can distinguish between the personal experience and what is true of the cultures in general. In some countries it can be difficult to find the informants but the creative teachers can use the Internet sources to find news or interviews which provide the learners with insight into a culture they are studying. Learners may also find pen friends or key pals from various countries. Not only learners can make friends with individuals from other cultures and learn about them, they may also reflect and teach other people about their own culture, lifestyle and traditions.

Role plays. The main aim of the development of the cultural observation skills is to help learners consider continually what constitutes culture. Teachers would like the learners to be able to describe how the concept of culture relates to the own experience:

- What is important to people?

- Why is anything in a certain culture the same as own while the others are different?

- Why don't all individuals think and act the same way?

- Why do people have rules and how are they learned?

- What factors describe the way we see the world and other individuals?

The strategy to encourage learners to investigate the above questions and use new knowledge of the cultures to simulate the authentic situations is using the role plays. Role plays get learners involved to empathize with the members of another culture and practice making 'mistakes' without serious consequences. The learners may act out the examples of breakdowns which result from misunderstanding of the cultural differences. For nstance, learners may think the communication ways that fail between the individuals from high- and low-context cultures and invent the scenarios to illustrate how the problem arises. Other learners in the ELT classroom may observe the role plays and point out why miscommunication took place. The students in class may discuss how the situations can be avoided and the learners may generate their solutions in follow-up role plays.

The teachers of English have to take the careful steps to prepare to examine the problem which can arise in a cross-cultural role play so that the learners gain desired perspectives:

- Make clear outlines of problems you as a teacher want the learners to solve (possibilities include the cultural behavior patterns, social and economic impacts, the important traditions and values which bind cultures together, etc.). Keep it simple but define a certain situation and motivation.

- Try to involve all learners in a process. Give as many learners as possible an opportunity to play various parts. Even if you cannot give the roles to every student, make sure everybody is involved in pre- and post-role play activities, asks questions and gives feedback.

- Ask learners to 'freeze' while they do or say something that a teacher or other learners find out some interesting and give some advice about it or discuss.

- Get relevant feedback. Don't allow the learners to criticize the classmates. You

would like students' constructive ideas about situations being played out.

– Design short checklists which encourage the observers to look for the key cultural elements in role plays using in a follow-up discussion. The observers should be as attentive as the students involved in role plays.

The next directions and scenarios may be used in role plays to investigate the issues which can occur while high- and low-context cultures collide.

Directions:

– choose the partner; Partner A reads Scenario A and Partner B reads Scenario B;

– anticipate what you can say or do and how you may answer to the partner;

– predict what you think the partner may say or do and how you may reply;

– plan the ways to support and defend own opinions;

– think of what language/vocabulary you can need for your conversation;

– use knowledge of high- and low-context cultures as you plan for and play the role.

Scenario 1a: Your daughter/son has the boyfriend/girlfriend from a low-

context culture. She/he wants to get married and move to the country a boyfriend/girlfriend is from. Tell your daughter/son why you think he/she should find the husband/wife from the high-context country instead.

Scenario 1b: You want to marry your girlfriend/boyfriend from the low-context culture and move away with him/her but your parents want you to marry someone from the high-context country. Explain you parents why you should be permitted to marry the low-context culture boyfriend/girlfriend.

Scenario 2a: You are from the high-context culture and you have just moved to a low-context country. You see the new neighbor that tells you to 'drop by' at any time. You have not had many friends yet so you decide to accept his/her invitation and you show up at the door unannounced. The neighbor that seemed so friendly before seems surprised to see you and tells you that he/she is busy now and does not invite you in. What is your reaction?

Scenario 2b: You live in the low-context culture and have the new neighbour that has just moved in from the high-context culture. You saw him/her once and to be friendly you told him/her to 'drop by' at any time. To your great surprise he/she comes to your home unannounced expecting to spend some time together. You have planned to rest today and enjoy privacy. How do you act?

Besides, a teacher can tell role players to 'freeze' when communication breaks down or they say or do something particularly inter-

esting and worth discussing. A teacher can even divide learners into high- and low-context teams that may substitute the role players during 'freezing' or give the teammates advice about what to say and do. Role plays can or cannot come to the natural conclusion. As a facilitator a teacher may judge while concluding role plays and put the learners in the groups to discuss impressions. What went well? What went badly? Was there any surprise? Did a role play elicit the examples of potential cross-cultural conflicts? Can the conflicts be resolved and if so, then how? After the discussion of a role play the learners may create the own scenario for the classmates to act out.

From the perspectives of ELT a teacher may also introduce the strategies for effective communication like giving an opinion, keeping the conversation going, politely disagreeing, turn taking, persuading, etc. The communication components may vary cross-culturally and a teacher may use the scenarios above mentioned to introduce pragmatic conventions of English-speaking cultures.

Cultural observations. To help learners estimate critically cultural practices and the products of own cultures and of other ones a teacher may collect books, magazines, newspapers, poetry, films, video, music and television shows, or have learners collect them. The learners may depict behaviour and the products that they read about, hear or see, discuss the differences and similarities between own cultures and cultures which they observe.

Learners may consider the following questions when watching films, TV shows or video:

– Where and how do individuals live?

– How do individuals spend time?

– What clothes do people wear?

– What and how do individuals eat?

– What the road side do people drive on?

Do they follow the traffic rules?

– What gestures or superstitions have you noticed?

– How do individuals greet one another?

Do they hug / shake hands, etc.?

– What is polite to act in the particular situation?

Using the resources, e.g. books, the Internet, magazines and newspapers, learners may find the answers to the following questions:

– What are important family traditions?

– What issues are important to the individuals in the specific cultures?

– What effects and shapes the ways individuals think and act?

– Is the educational system similar to one of your home country?

- What roles do different genders and generations play in the society?
- What is the health care system like?
- How and why do people celebrate particular holidays?

A teacher may ask learners to work in the groups to discuss culture elements

which they observed and how individuals relate to one another in various roles in the society. The follow-up steps are to have learners select the pictures or video from own cultures, describe them and explain what they show about their cultures. The learners may also compare and contrast the images and objects from own cultures and the English-speaking cultures, and make presentations in the classroom about significance of both cultures. For example, when Easter time comes around the learners choose to discuss Easter traditions over the world.

In addition to only mentioning these traditions, learners also explore how they differ from each other, how some countries cannot celebrate Easter and how important it is to respect other people's traditions and values. Students' discussions and reactions are very enthusiastic when they become aware of how different cultures celebrate Easter and even would like to visit the countries to get to know these cultures. Learners take the opportunity to mention also how English is a language due to its global spread that facilitates communication with other people.

Culture journals. Keeping 'culture journals' allows learners to reflect on what they discuss and experience in the classroom. These journals may be the ways for the teachers and learners to communicate privately or it may be something for the learners to share with classmates. In journals the learners, writing in the English language, reflect on the cultural learning experience and on own feelings since the students become more aware of own culture and the culture that they study. The teachers have to give time to the learners in the classroom, perhaps 5 to 10 minutes at the end of the lesson, to reflect after they complete culturally related activities. The learners may be assigned to reflect on the certain activities in the classroom or write about out-of-school cultural insights that they can have. Over time journals become the records of learners' deepening cultural awareness and changes that they view another culture and themselves. Such a journal does not need to be a literature masterpiece. Journals are meant to be recording of emotions, thoughts and reactions to classroom activities and serve as records of the experiences which may help the learners reflect on the growth toward becoming intercultural competent.

Thus, the need to integrate culture in English language teaching is now firmly es-

tablished. Discussions on whether or not to include culture in the English language classroom is long past; now the debate points to matter of the effective method. A number of English language teachers and educators have already presented a number of valuable methods for teaching culture like role plays, developing the mental images of the target culture, celebrating a holiday or festival of the target culture, teaching culture through nonverbal communication or cultural problem solving

Conclusion and prospect for further research. The relevance of this study is that it focuses on the problem of intercultural competence development in schools, which fully complies with the new native educational standards, which are now entering into force in all Ukrainian schools.

Despite the active attention that is manifested to the formation of students' intercultural competence, the problem of intercultural awareness and competence development has not been sufficiently studied. Besides, many teachers and methodologists speak first of all about the formation of intercultural competence while studying in higher educational institutions, although today children often get acquainted and imbued with a foreign culture before leaving school. It follows that intercultural competence should be developed actively at school. Secondary school, and in particular high school, is the time when schoolchildren begin to develop the concept of personality, self-awareness, self-esteem, as well as perception of the world around them.

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**ЕФЕКТИВНІ ВИДИ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ РОЗУМІННЯ УЧНЯМИ КУЛЬТУРНИХ
ОСОБЛИВОСТЕЙ НА УРОКАХ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ**

Зазначається, що мета вивчення іноземної мови – це не лише питання оволодіння цією мовою, але й сприяння учням у набутті знань про культуру та цінності інших народів. Акцентується увага на тому, як ефективні види діяльності на уроках англійської мови мотивують учнів набувати вмінь переносити культуру, знання та цінності за межі уроків англійської мови.

Наголошується, що система викладання іноземної мови має не лише забезпечувати навчання учнів досліджувати та розуміти навколишній світ у глобальному сенсі, а й сприяти формуванню міжкультурної обізнаності та міжкультурної компетентності.

Доводиться важливість міжкультурного спілкування у навчанні англійської мови. Наголошується на дедалі важливій ролі викладання англійської мови з метою розвитку комунікативної обізнаності та міжкультурної компетентності учнів.

Ключові слова: культура; міжкультурна обізнаність; міжкультурна компетентність; міжкультурна комунікація; викладання англійської мови; види діяльності; стратегії.

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