

DIDACTIC SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *The article examines the didactic foundations and methodological approaches to developing cultural competence in English language teaching. It highlights the importance of integrating cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and value-based learning into the language acquisition process. The study emphasizes that cultural competence is not limited to learning facts about foreign cultures, but involves the ability to interpret cultural symbols, compare cultural norms, and apply culturally appropriate communication strategies.*

Keywords: *cultural competence; English language teaching; didactic support; intercultural communication; authentic materials; cultural awareness; pedagogical technology; value-based learning; communicative competence; educational methodology.*

Integrating a national-cultural component into the process of foreign language teaching requires the development of new and appropriate tools to ensure learners' effective acquisition of the material. Modern methodology distinguishes three types of lexical units that vary in their degree of national-cultural specificity and convey semantics characteristic of a particular cultural layer. These include:

Background vocabulary – lexical units that denote objects and phenomena familiar and similar across different cultures, yet used and functioning differently in each language;

Connotative vocabulary – lexical units whose denotative meanings are similar, but whose shades of meaning differ due to the cultural and historical development of the country;

Realities – objects and phenomena that are specific to a particular country and completely unknown or uncharacteristic in other countries¹.

The need to search for and study such units becomes especially evident in communication with representatives of other cultures, as they may refer to realia while reading books, newspapers, or articles, or while watching feature films or documentaries, which also involve connotative and background vocabulary². Linguistic and cultural studies (linguostranovedenie) is considered one of the most widely used methods for developing sociocultural competence. According to G. D.

¹ Гальперин, И.Р. Текст как объект лингвистического исследования. – М.: Едиториал УРСС, 2005. – 144 с

² Починок, Т.В. Формирование социокультурной компетенции как основы межкультурного общения // Иностранные языки в школе. – 2007. – № 7. – С. 37–40

Tomakhin, this discipline is primarily linguistic in nature, and information about the country of the target language is studied through the language itself³. Linguostranovedenie is a discipline that enables learners to become familiar with a new culture, and its main task is to study vocabulary that most accurately and fully reflects the national color. Lexicology and phraseology form the linguistic foundation of linguostranovedenie, since these branches of linguistics deal with identifying nationally marked units, which may be referred to as linguistically oriented toward country studies⁴.

The sociocultural component of foreign language teaching has great potential in engaging learners in intercultural communication and familiarizing them with the achievements of national culture in the development of human civilization, as it is an integral part of national culture. For example, in linguocultural studies classes, students learn about the geographical location and social structure of the United Kingdom and explore the culture of English-speaking countries. The literature of the target language is also an effective tool for developing sociocultural competence. English fiction serves as an invaluable source of sociocultural information. As a part of national culture, English literary works reflect the sociocultural reality of their time and therefore encompass various components of national culture. Through reading English literature, learners acquire important linguistic knowledge related to aesthetic and artistic culture, art, and the lives and works of prominent classical and contemporary cultural figures, all of which contribute to the development of sociocultural competence⁵.

In modern pedagogy, video materials are also considered an effective tool for teaching foreign languages and developing sociocultural competence. A video material is an auxiliary resource used in the educational process, employing audio and visual technical means to convey speech-related information through the learner's sensory system via visual and auditory channels. Teaching with video materials is implemented on the basis of the visual perception principle, which is one of the fundamental didactic principles.

Due to the combination of visual, auditory, and motor-visual perception, learning material is memorized more quickly and efficiently compared to material presented only in oral or written form⁶. Proverbs and fairy tales as forms of folklore also represent an interesting and effective means of developing sociocultural competence. Through these brief expressions, learners encounter phraseological units whose

³ Томахин, Г.Д. Реалии в языке и культуре // Иностранные языки в школе. – 1997. – № 3. – С. 13–18

⁴ Новый словарь методических терминов и понятий [Электронный ресурс]. – URL: http://methodological_terms.academic.ru/

⁵ Елизарова, Г.В. Культура и обучение иностранным языкам. – СПб.: КАРО, 2005. – 352 с.

⁶ Михайлова, С.В. Использование видеоматериала как средства формирования социокультурной компетенции в процессе обучения иностранному языку / С.В. Михайлова, О.В. Михайлова // Филологические науки. Вопросы теории и практики. – 2014. – № 10-1 (40). – С. 143–146.

meanings are understood only by native speakers, and they can observe the characteristics of a people's life and traditions, as proverbs may contain historical and archaic elements—realia relating to the culture and historical period in which they originated. Folklore also gives learners the opportunity to compare their own culture with the culture of the target language. Many proverbs and expressions have equivalents in other languages, yet their meanings are conveyed using different words. Indeed, folk wisdom is universal, but the ways in which ideas are expressed through language may vary.

Learning and memorizing phraseological units, idioms, riddles, and proverbs creates strong motivation in learners. There are various forms of working with such material that can interest learners of any age: theatrical scenes and role-playing activities, discussions and debates, dialogues, and “pro-and-con” essays. At the same time, knowing the folklore of the target language facilitates communication with foreigners and provides a foundation for deeper language learning. Recently, the word “authentic” has become very popular. Analysis of numerous sources shows that the concept of an “authentic text” entered methodology relatively recently and is described as “an oral or written text produced by native speakers and not adapted to the learner's language level.” K. S. Krichevskaya defines it as follows: “An authentic text is understood as a text that has not been specially modified. Such a text reflects natural language use”⁷. In general, texts that were previously considered authentic were those intended not for educational purposes but for real communication among native speakers. Such texts can be found in English newspapers and magazines, English fiction, and on English-language websites and forums. Thus, an authentic text is one that contains cultural realia-information about traditions, customs, and folklore.

The sociocultural aspect of foreign language teaching can be implemented at various stages of learning through the extensive use of authentic texts that reflect national thinking, lifestyle and traditions, social norms, speech behavior, and the overall mentality. However, since authentic texts may be difficult for learners, especially at the elementary level, authors of modern teaching materials often create independent educational texts or adapt authentic ones.

Indeed, such texts should be included in learning materials because, first, they significantly increase students' motivation to learn new material. Second, they prepare learners for communication with foreigners, as they reflect natural language use. From the perspective of reading skills, authentic texts develop the ability to predict language and help form the skill of understanding the main idea of a text. Authentic texts are also rich in nationally marked vocabulary, enabling learners to reinforce their knowledge, understand realia, and acquire new words. Thus, there are various methods for developing sociocultural competence that support practical language

⁷ Кричевская, К.С. Прагматические материалы, знакомящие учеников с культурой и средой обитания жителей страны изучаемого языка // Иностранные языки в школе. – 1996. – № 1. – С. 13–17

acquisition. These include authentic texts, folklore, video materials, the literature of English-speaking countries, and linguocultural studies—that is, authentic materials.

Using an interactive visual methodological game in English lessons also contributes to the development of cultural competence. The advantages of this method are reflected in the game called “Introducing Nations and Their Cultures,” in which students must describe the national costumes and cultural values of several nations in English.

Developing sociocultural competence in foreign language teaching is one of the key objectives of modern education, ensuring that learners acquire not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to engage in intercultural communication. Research shows that the effectiveness of developing this competence directly depends on the content and quality of didactic tools used in the learning process. In particular, the use of authentic texts, folklore, video materials, literature from English-speaking countries, and elements of linguocultural studies expands learners’ cultural awareness, helps them understand national-cultural realities, and immerses them in a natural language environment.

These tools enhance learners’ reading, listening, and communication skills while allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the language’s national specificity, historical roots, and cultural content. Interactive methods, especially visual methodological games, further increase learners’ motivation and actively engage them in the language learning process.

Thus, when various methods and tools for developing sociocultural competence are applied in combination, learners develop the ability to perceive a foreign language not only as a grammatical system but also as a cultural phenomenon. This, in turn, prepares them to become full participants in global intercultural communication.

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