

Implementing a Modified Intercultural Competency Curriculum in an Integrated English Classroom

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Abstract: The article deals with the issues based on implementing a modified intercultural competency curriculum in an integrated English classroom. As we know, a multicultural society is best served by a culturally responsive curriculum. Educational establishments that acknowledge the diversity of their student population understand the importance of promoting cultural awareness. Teachers who are interested in fostering a cultural awareness in their classroom should actively demonstrate to their students that they genuinely care about their cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs. To this end, there are several strategies that we can use while developing intercultural competency in an integrated English classroom.

Keywords: cultural awareness, intercultural competency, modified intercultural competency curriculum, curriculum, and strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Today, people have more opportunities to communicate with people from other countries. The success of such communication undoubtedly depends on both certain linguistic and intercultural competencies of the participants in the dialogue.

Undoubtedly, language and culture are inextricably linked with each other, so language cannot be taught without culture.

The importance of the development of intercultural competence in the process of language teaching is emphasized by many researchers [1], [2], [3], [4], as well as in the document "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR)", used in countries of the European Union [5].

The document states that one of the main goals of teaching a foreign language today is "to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identity and cultural diversity through effective international communication" and the development of students' "ability" to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries" [5, p.3].

A modified (adapted) program is a program based on an exemplary (typical) program or a program developed by another author, but modified taking into account the characteristics of the educational institution, the age and level of preparation of children. From our point of view, in order to achieve the above goal, students need: understanding of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Sociocultural knowledge should be related to everyday life, living conditions, interpersonal relationships, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language, behavior, while intercultural awareness involves knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relationship between native culture and foreign culture of the language being studied.

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DISCUSSIONS

Indeed, at the present stage of education, intercultural communication is becoming a new pedagogical concept that penetrates into all aspects of language teaching. Unfortunately, not all foreign language teachers are ready to be competent intercultural communicators with sufficient experience. The reason for this, in our opinion, is the disintegration of interdisciplinary connections in the classroom (the absence of a connection between a foreign language and such subjects as history, geography, art, etc.), the limited or complete absence of communication between teachers themselves and native speakers of the target language (they do not encounter different intercultural contexts, do not have interpersonal contacts with foreigners, do not improve their intercultural competence through real intercultural practice). All these factors hinder the development of intercultural competence of foreign language teachers.

To begin with, “culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes the thoughts, communication, language, practices, beliefs, values, customs, interaction patterns, and roles, attitudes, and behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group; as well as the ability to pass them on to future generations” [6,21].

By learning a foreign language, students learn about the cultures of the peoples who use that language. In turn, by teaching a foreign language, teachers themselves can truly master the language, thereby mastering the cultural contexts through which the language is taught. The lack of knowledge about the cultural values of the language being studied and the local culture leads to negative consequences.

Language teaching should help students acquire both linguistic and intercultural competence. Linguistic competence involves correct and proper communication in a foreign language, while intercultural competence promotes understanding of interaction with speakers of other cultures, avoiding stereotypes and accepting them as individuals with distinctive views, values and behavior.

The development of intercultural competence in the lessons of a foreign language can be due to a number of activities in which students first discuss their own experience with the culture of the peoples of the language being studied based on listening or reading about it, and then compare a foreign culture with their own.

Some scientists believe that an effective way to master intercultural competence is an empirical approach to modeling the content of education and the use of role-playing games, during which the creative abilities of students are activated and their fundamental knowledge is formed that constructs the correct cultural behavior, i.e. in general, preparing students for real intercultural communication [7,14].

For the development of intercultural competence, content and integrated language learning should go in parallel, complementing each other, since the focus of students on topics of interest to them stimulates the analysis and comparison of two cultures. All sorts of authentic texts, audio and video materials, most of which can be found on the Internet, can serve as materials that can be used to bring a foreign language culture into the classroom. True stories written by native speakers can provide contexts that invite discussion, analysis, and comparison.

Teaching a foreign language through the lens of intercultural communication should enable students, as well as teachers themselves, to develop new attitudes, new skills and new critical awareness, for example, by working in groups or doing project work. Intercultural literacy of students can be assessed in discussions, cultural projects, role-playing games. But it should be borne in mind that knowledge about the culture of the language being studied is only one of the aspects of intercultural competence, and in order to fully master it, it is important to develop the

ability of students to see the relationship between different cultures, to be aware of these differences, to evaluate their own and other cultures.

We will offer a description of our own work in this direction. Before starting it, we had conversations, debates in English among the students. Here are the questions they discussed:

- What are you interested in, and can knowledge of the foreign language you are studying (English) help you in your hobby?
- What topics would you like to discuss in English lessons?
- What texts and types of work in English do you like?
- In which class was it more interesting for you to learn a foreign language?
- What prevents you from learning a foreign language?

Conversations, disputes and answers to questionnaires were analyzed, data were written out for use in further work. We would like to talk about the statements of students, about some practical conclusions.

Most students say with conviction that a foreign language needs to be known in order to get to know the life and culture of the peoples of other countries better, to maintain contacts with their representatives, which strengthen friendship between peoples, that the language makes it possible to penetrate deeper into the knowledge accumulated humanity.

But, unfortunately, not everyone is of this opinion. One of the students noted that it is enough to know one's native language well, that there are translators, so there is no need to know a foreign language. The second expressed the opinion that the content of the textbooks is of little interest.

To motivate interest in learning a foreign language, a discussion was organized with high school students on the topic “Why do we study foreign languages?”

On the instructions of the teacher, the students collected thematic material: a short article about the English language, presentations on the topics “Language”, “Languages of the world”, “Statements of famous Uzbek and English classics about the importance of knowing foreign languages” with illustrations, portraits and photographs. Another mini-group of students prepared a list of English-speaking countries, marked them on the world map; took notes on the difference between British and American English.

At the beginning of the work, we found out what the students are interested in.

When working with a newspaper in a foreign language, everyone received an article on the topic that occupies him (sports, painting, gender issues, theater, technology, etc.). Although the students tried to talk about what they had read, it was noticeable that they were not particularly interested in this work. Therefore, it was decided to discuss the same topics in the “dialogue of cultures” at the next lesson.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, through the prism of intercultural dialogue, students developed not only the skills of types of speech activity (listening, reading, speaking, writing), but also formed their intercultural competence.

Taking into account the results of our work, we came to the conclusion that the importance of culture in language learning should not be neglected and the focus should be only on the language being studied. Although the use of cultural and country studies material in the educational process ultimately requires certain efforts from the teacher, it has a positive effect on increasing

intercultural competence and the teacher himself. This allowed us to reveal that the widespread use of such teaching methods and teaching aids containing a cultural component in the process of classroom and extracurricular work contributes to the activation of the mental and cognitive activity of students.

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