

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING TECHNICAL ENGLISH

The article deals with teaching technical English which involves formation of both students' professionally oriented linguistic competence and their intercultural competence. The necessity of recognition, value and respect of cultural differences for students willing to engage in international learning and job opportunities is explained. Intercultural communication is defined as sending and receiving messages not only across languages and cultures, but across social systems and societies. Moral-ethical dimensions of intercultural communication are provided: knowledge of cultural factors, insight into cultural identity, readiness to accept cultural differences and skills in negotiating and bridging gaps. Much attention is paid to a negative aspect of intercultural communication such as culture shock which is described as the anxious emotional response to disconfirmed expectations that come from encountering with unfamiliar cultures. Provided is the detailed analysis of reasons for culture shock: ethnocentrism, lack of knowledge about fundamental characteristics of another culture, difficulties to predict possible reactions of people in different situations. Thus, the strategies of developing students' intercultural communication competence are identified: to expand their knowledge of fundamental characteristics of other cultures and compare them with their own using the dimensions of national culture, to use active listening techniques, to challenge students to recognize implicit values and meanings, to take part in discussions based on respect and tolerance, to practice reflection on the experience by using supplementary course books or isolated grammar and vocabulary activities related to cross-cultural issues. It is emphasized that developing students' intercultural competence enables them understand and accept people from other cultures and fully appreciate this experience avoiding culture shock or other negative consequences.

Key words: *intercultural communication, intercultural competence, cultural differences, culture shock, active listening, dimensions of national culture.*

Academic mobility, technology advances, globalization of economy and culture create positive environment for those who recognize, value and respect cultural differences willing to engage in international learning and job opportunities. Teaching technical English involves not only the formation of students' professionally oriented linguistic competence, but also intercultural competence. Students must demonstrate social and cultural knowledge associated with standards of conduct in academic and professional environment; they should also demonstrate pragmatic knowledge about the nature of intercultural communication and its participants. As a result, students should be able to apply the acquired knowledge in real life situations and perform successful interaction in English.

The aim of this article is to identify strategies of developing students' intercultural communication competence at technical universities. To achieve this aim it is necessary to analyze the meaning of intercultural communication and related terms, investigate the difficulties like culture shock and define effective ways of acquiring and developing intercultural competence.

Prominent researchers Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede are considered to be pioneers in the study of culture and intercultural communication. Numerous scientists such as L. S. Harms, W. B. Hart, R. E. Porter, P. Riley, E. M. Rogers, C. S. Roy, B. D. Ruben, L. A. Samovar and A. Smith have also made significant contributions to this field. However, the issue of developing students' intercultural communication competence at technical universities was paid little attention to.

Communicative approach in teaching English is connected with the shift from form, namely producing grammatically correct sentences, to function or actual use of the language, so that successful interaction becomes the ultimate goal. Introducing the intercultural dimension into the aims of language teaching enables students to successfully communicate, be aware of cultural similarities and differences and at the same time develop human relationships with the speakers of other languages [3, p. 7].

According to L. A. Samovar, the main peculiarity of intercultural communication is that it involves interaction between the people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are so different that they influence the process of communication [7, p. 8]. R. Arent defines intercultural communication as sending and receiving messages across languages and cultures. Comparing the terms in both definitions – languages or symbol systems, cultures or cultural perceptions, the process of communication and sending and receiving messages – it is possible to conclude that they are similar. At the same time R. Arent remarks that intercultural communication is also possible across social systems and societies which means even between those who speak the same language but belong to different social groups [2, p. 2]. Culture is described as the way of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is not something which is fixed forever though. Social, technological, political and other changes may cause shifts in the values of individuals and lead to changes in cultural beliefs [4, p. 169].

Because of the differences between languages, cultures or social groups the experience of intercultural communication may be negative. Culture shock is described as the anxious emotional response to disconfirmed

expectations that come from encountering with unfamiliar cultures [1, с. 528]. The individual reactions associated with culture shock may vary from a sense of disorientation, feelings of rejection or irritation to complete withdrawal.

L. A. Samovar names several possible reasons for culture shock, and one of them is ethnocentrism which is defined as a belief that one culture is superior to all others thus leading to prejudice and even hostility. Another reason may be the lack of knowledge about fundamental characteristics of another culture like its political background, key values and beliefs, verbal and nonverbal behavior, social etiquette, and others [7, p. 10-13]. Professor Geert Hofstede conducted one of the most comprehensive studies focused on workplace values and culture and formulated dimensions of national culture: Power Distance dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept unequal distribution of power; Individualism versus Collectivism dimension or a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected first of all to take care of themselves versus a tightly-knit framework in which individuals expect others to look after them; Masculinity versus Femininity dimension when the masculinity side represents achievement, heroism, assertiveness, while the femininity stands for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak; Uncertainty Avoidance dimension which expresses the attitude of individuals towards uncertainty and ambiguity. Before applying the dimensions of national culture one should notice that G. Hofstede defined culture as "the collective mental programming of the human mind" of one group different from others. Therefore, understanding cultural differences is possible by comparing the countries' scores on the Hofstede dimensions and thus to recognize the deep-rooted reasons of differences between them, learn more about other cultures and finally, develop ability to respect them [5].

L. A. Samovar also warns about the difficulties predicting possible reactions of people in different situations. The researcher recommends being watchful encountering other cultures, focusing on people and context, trying to adjust the message to both [7, p. 17]. R. Arent developed seven listening techniques of active listeners which should be practiced by those who want to be successful in intercultural communication. They are: to stay focused on the speaker's main points, to ignore all potential distractions, to listen attentively, to maintain eye contact and use other nonverbal cues, to be open to new topics or ideas, to ask for clarification if necessary, to confirm or reformulate the speaker's main points [2, p. 8].

Another way of preventing or overcoming culture shock is to find similarities between other people and cultures, for example, basic human values and desires. While focusing on similarities it is necessary to be aware and respectful of cultural differences. Only by granting similarities and recognizing differences it is possible to develop intercultural ethical perspective [7, p. 17-19]. Intercultural communication is successful provided that it is based on respect for individuals and equality of human rights.

The components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Knowledge implies awareness of social groups in different countries and their interaction. Skills are first of all connected with the ability to interpret events from other cultures and relate them to similar events of one's own country, and also with the ability to learn about other cultures and apply this knowledge in real communicative situations. Attitudes such as curiosity and openness allow students to destroy stereotypes, to take somebody else's perspective. Values are deeply embedded in one's personality determining behavior and causing unavoidable responses, that is why it is crucial to be aware of one's own values and their possible influence on other people. Therefore the task of a teacher is take into account the importance of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and to create the environment which fosters development of students' intercultural competence [3, p. 9-13].

It is possible to add intercultural dimension to a set curriculum used to teach technical English by taking a different perspective and challenging students to recognize implicit values and meanings in the material they are using. Texts, video and audio recordings, podcasts, diagrams, etc., should be authentic, preferably presenting contrasting views. The activities involve checking understanding, discussing and writing which give opportunities for students to analyze and compare opposing views thus promoting critical thinking [3, p. 22-24]. The task of a teacher is to set rules for discussions based on respect and tolerance creating an atmosphere which allows students to take risks expressing their views freely. Group discussions should be followed by reflection on the experience which may address issues connected with encountering cultural differences [3, p. 32-34]. Reflection includes deep thinking about the issues discussed or related ones, about various aspects of student's personal experience which leads to a better understanding of their cultural assumptions and views.

Some technical universities use books published by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press or Pearson Education, which include cross-cultural material and activities related to it, as supplementary. For example, Intelligent Business Coursebook aimed at developing key communicative skills is supplemented by a "Culture at work" feature that raises students' awareness of how cultural differences affect communication between people from different countries. Skills Book deals with influences of national culture on international business communication. The video of the course illustrates the effects of national and corporate culture on relationships between two companies. Therefore, all the components of the course combine the language, business skills and cultural issues [8, p. 5-8].

It is also possible to use isolated grammar or vocabulary activities which are related to cultural differences teaching technical English. For example, a grammar activity "Rules around the world" from the New Total English may be used for practicing the usage of modal verbs. Students discuss the rules in pairs and choose the correct form of a modal verb: "In Finland you have / don't have to say 'hello' to somebody you don't know very well when you meet them in the street or a lift". Even if students make a mistake (the correct answer is "don't have"), they learn about the rules in different countries and will be at ease in similar situations going abroad. After checking the answers students should change the rules to make them true for their own country [6, p. 119].

G. M. Willems claims that the ability of students to reflect and understand the complexities of cultural identity and intercultural communication form basic concepts of high quality language teaching. Therefore, teachers at technical universities should add intercultural communication to their traditional professional

curriculum. Intercultural competence has four moral-ethical dimensions: knowledge of cultural factors, insight into what constitutes cultural identity, readiness towards opening up to cultural differences and skills in negotiating, identifying and overcoming misunderstanding [9, p. 9-10].

To conclude, teaching technical English involves developing intercultural competence for students to be engaged in international learning and job opportunities. Intercultural communication is defined as sending and receiving messages not only across languages and cultures, but across social systems and societies. Intercultural competence has moral-ethical dimensions: knowledge of cultural factors, insight into cultural identity, readiness to accept cultural differences and skills in negotiating and bridging gaps. To avoid the negative experience like culture shock students should learn more about fundamental characteristics of other cultures and compare them with their own which is possible using dimensions of national culture. Active listening techniques are also important for successful intercultural communication. Intercultural dimension may be added to a set curriculum used to teach technical English by challenging students to recognize implicit values and meanings, take part in the discussions based on respect and tolerance, by practicing reflection on the experience, using supplementary coursebooks or isolated grammar or vocabulary activities related to cross-cultural issues.

Subsequent research work may include providing more detailed recommendations for using effective strategies to develop students' intercultural communication competence at technical universities.

References

1. Arends R. I. Learning to teach / R. I. Arends. – New York : McGraw-Hill. – 539 p.
2. Arent R. Bringing the Cross-Cultural Gap. Listening and Speaking Tasks for Developing Fluency in English / Russell Arent. – Michigan : University of Michigan Press, 2009. – 152 p.
3. Byram M. Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: a Practical Introduction for Teachers / M. Byram, B. Gribkova, H. Starkey – Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2002. – 42 p.
4. Cranton P. Professional Development as Transformative Learning. New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults / Patricia Cranton. – San Francisco : Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996. – 256 p.
5. Hofstede Centre. National Culture. Retrieved from: <http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>
6. Naughton D. Total English Teacher's Resource Book / D. Naughton. – Harlow : Pearson Education Limited, 2006. – 219 p.
7. Samovar L. A. Communication between cultures / L. A. Samovar, R. E. Porter, E. R. McDaniel, C. S. Roy. – Boston : Wadsworth, 2012. – 432 p.
8. Trappe T. Intelligent Business Upper Intermediate Teacher's Book / T. Trappe, G. Tullis. – Harlow : Pearson Education Limited, 2006. – 192 p.
9. Willems G. M. Language teacher education policy. Promoting Linguistic Diversity and Intercultural Communication / Gerard M. Willems. – Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2002. – 22 p.

Чугай О. Ю.

РОЗВИТОК МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ ПІД ЧАС ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ТЕХНІЧНОГО СПРЯМУВАННЯ

Розглядаються особливості викладання англійської мови технічного спрямування, що передбачає розвиток міжкультурної компетентності студентів. Міжкультурне спілкування визначається як взаємодія між представниками різних мов і культур, а також соціальних спільнот і прошарків. Стратегіями розвитку міжкультурної компетентності студентів та запобігання культурного шоку є поповнення знань про інші культури та порівняння їх з культурою рідної країни за допомогою вимірів національної культури, використання активних методів слухання, участь у дискусіях з виявом поваги та толерантності, проведення рефлексії отриманого досвіду.

Ключові слова: міжкультурна комунікація, міжкультурна компетентність, культурні відмінності, культурний шок, активне слухання, виміри національної культури.

Чугай О. Ю.

РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТОВ ПРИ ИЗУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ

Рассматриваются особенности преподавания английского языка технического направления, предусматривающего развитие межкультурной компетентности студентов. Межкультурное общение определяется как взаимодействие между представителями разных языков и культур, а также социальных сообществ и слоев. Стратегиями развития межкультурной компетентности студентов и предотвращения культурного шока является пополнение знаний о других культурах и сравнение их с культурой родной страны с помощью измерений национальной культуры, использование активных методов слушания, участие в дискуссиях с демонстрацией уважения и толерантности, проведение рефлексии полученного опыта.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная компетентность, культурные различия, культурный шок, активное слушание, измерения национальной культуры.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 07.09.2015