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FRAMEWORK OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

Статья посвящена методологическим проблемам, учитывающим когнитивные и культурные аспекты при изучении английского языка как иностранного. Для обучаемого любой разговорный опыт с носителем языка является формой межкультурного общения. Построение речевой стратегии в процессе обучения происходит в условиях межкультурного контакта. Изучение языка в процессе коммуникации находится под непосредственным воздействием культурной среды, что способствует развитию как речевой, так и культурной грамотности обучаемого.

The teaching of second and foreign languages is a major international enterprise. The current status of English has turned a significant percentage of the world's population into constant users of English. The widespread need for English puts a considerable pressure on the educational resources of many countries. Problems related to these things are discussed the world over. They range from practical questions concerning curriculum methodology to more theoretical questions concerning the nature of foreign language learning and the role of cognitive and cultural variables in the acquisition process.

A further input to our understanding of learning has been provided by studies of aspects that relate to communicative or sociolingustic competence. These have drawn some new research in attempts to describe how language learners develop the ability to use language for social interaction. For the speaker of a foreign language, any conversational exchange with a native speaker of the target language is a form of cross-cultural encounter. This makes the study of non-native conversational discourse rich territory for the exploration of how culturally specific assumptions surface in cross-cultural encounters. Thus, in the foreign language classroom the activities and cultural influences cannot be separated from what is learned. A Language learning is fully situated within a given cultural context; the learner becomes enculturated or apprenticed into a particular learning culture that in many ways reflects the general culture. Cross-culturalism has been cited as an important variable in learning strategy use; it deals with a dynamic system of understandings across cultures or subcultures. Comprehending cross-cultural similarities and differences involves carefully considering aspects of culture, such as concepts of time, personal space, body language, worship, relationships, language learning strategies within a particular culture and across cultures.

In the USA, for example, one can use social connectors to get introduced, but a social introduction is not as effective as it is in other countries. Doing a special favour for a friend is not a respected business practice. Succeeding without the help of special personal connections shows independence and an ability to work hard. These qualities are highly respected.

Very often people are faced with confrontation situations, and need to be aware of a special technique for being appropriately persuasive. There are many successful ways to persuade some one to agree to something. In each culture there may be a common style of persuasion, but styles vary greatly from person to person. Some believe in being competitive, impersonal, logic, so they react quickly and decisively, taking advantage of the other's weaknesses; many prefer a more yielding cooperative style. The success of their style depends on being able to make concessions of speaking indirectly so that no one is humiliated. Basically, there are three types of behaviour in confrontation situations: assertive, submissive, and aggressive. Learners should handle techniques leading to the proper effect:

speech actions: shouting, high pitch, threatening, rude, whining, apologetic, hesitant, calm, polite, persistent, controlled, clear, etc.;

body language: pointing fingers, feet apart, folded arms, staring, looking down, looking away, upright stance, open gestures, relaxed, smiling.

The knowledge of this technique provides opportunities for learners to practice skills needed for successful communication. Awareness of cultural dissimilarity among societies is perhaps only the first move towards learning the skills of intercultural communication. The second step is knowledge. If we are to communicate with others, we need to learn about their cultures, their symbols, their heroes, their ways of doing things, and so on. Thus while we may not share their values, we can begin to understand and respect them.

The underlying assumption is that communication, language and culture cannot be separated. Successful cross-cultural communication demands cultural fluency as well as linguistic fluency. In order to communicate effectively in English, learners need more than just competence in English grammar and vocabulary. They must also have an awareness of the culturally determined patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication which speakers of

English follow.

Obviously language does reflect the society we live in, it also contributes to how we experience that reality. Language appears such a natural instrument with which we can describe reality, its terms and expressions seem to describe the way things are and will always be. And these patterns of speech belong to convention and habit. For instance, numerous findings show that men and women use different style of communication; when they are talking together, it seems that men interrupt more, talk more and use more imperatives, whereas women ask more questions and tend to use more polite forms of speech. Also, there is a division into sexist (with masculine or feminine features: clairman, housewife, merse, salesman, piglets) and anti-sexist language (lawyer, flight attendant, doctor, author, humanity).

Men and women may be two halves of the same species but they seem to live in almost separate worlds. Most societies have traditionally regarded men as "doers" – warriors, hunters, scientist's artists, writers, captains of industry and politics. Women have been the "carers" – of men and their children. A man's place has been in the jungle, the batterfield or the world of work, while a woman's has been in the home. All these have generated some effect on developing cultural values such as: men are the stronger sex physically, so naturally they dominate. They tend to be tougher and more aggressive. Women produce children so they have a natural instinct to be caring passive dependent and emotional. The power of this patriarch is based on an all-pervasive ideology of male superiority. And many verbal conventions assume the world is populated entirely by men. Even the term "feminine" does not always carry correspondingly positive associations. It does not often suggest positive "value like delicate caring soft as in she makes a good nurse because she is very feminine". But it can have extremely negative connotation. She is a difficult person to work with: she is too feminine. Here feminine means hysterical illogical unreasonable. Masculine on the contrary never carries negative implications: it simply implies strong powerful. In the 1970s feminists were the first to draw attention to the fact that language seems to exclude women, tend to reinforce a sense of powerlessness. When the "term" man is applied to categories of work (chairman foreman spokesman) it becomes clear that although it is meant to imply both sexes, it very frequently implies exactly what it says spokesman. If the language assumes that men will fill these jobs, it becomes natural for men to do so – and exceptional if women do. And even women internalize the sense that it is inappropriate for them to do these things. This example points to an underlying trend in the English language: to assume that male is the norm and to define women by reference to their sexuality.

And every time we use prejudicial terms we actively re-circulate sexist ways of seeing the difference between the sexes. These relations build up the proper understanding of appropriateness of language due to masculine or feminine factor. Thus, there are some recommendations intended to avoid sexist language by suggesting anti-sexist alternatives. In other words they should be replaced by more precise non-sex referent variants: manning-staffing, working, running; masterful-skillful; old masters – classic artists; forfathers – ancestors; manpower-work force. The "generic he" should be avoided. Both feminine and masculine pronouns can be used where appropriate. Alternative strategies include the use of the plural and the omission of 3rd person pronouns entirely.

In raising awareness of cultural factors, we shall aim to sharpen observation, encourage critical thinking about cultural stereotypes, and develop tolerance. These are educational issues which reach out well beyond mere language teaching. Cultural awareness-raising is an aspect of values education. As such it offers a welcome opportunity for transcending the often narrow limits of language teaching.

Cultural awareness is the term that describes sensitivity to the impact of culturally induced behaviour on language use and communication. It covers the target culture life and institutions, beliefs and values, as well as everyday attitudes and feelings conveyed not only by language but also by paralinguistic features such as dress, gesture, facial expression, stance and movement. The term cultural awareness compasses the three qualities: awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others, ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint. The introduction of this in the context of teaching English as a foreign language seems to have three main aims:

- To raise awareness of cultural features (both similarities and differences);
- To modify behaviour to take account of these features;
- To impart knowledge about the other culture.
- If we apply these aims to the possible areas of culturally coloured syllabuses, the major emphasis will be the following:
- Information (or factual) culture, i. e. the way people typically behave towards each other, their attitudes and values. This includes body language and conversational formulae and the way these are combined in successful communication;
- Achievements culture, i. e. artistic and literary achievements (traditional culture).

We have to recognize that the latter remains as it was, but behaviour culture has been broadened to include culturally induced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviour that affects acceptability in the host community. So in other words, "little c"(behaviour culture) falls into three interrelated categories: products (literature, folklore, art, music, artifacts), ideas (beliefs, values, institutions), behaviours (customs, habits, dress, foods, leisure). In my view, the study of these culturally-influenced categories should arise out of the language material being studied, but should nevertheless be clearly identified and systematically treated as a regular feature of the language learning.

The ideas of cross-cultural training forming an integral part of a language course lead to the framework facilitating the development of cross-cultural communication skills with the following goals:

- To develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors and tat social variables such as age, sex, social class and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave;
- To increase awareness of conventional behavior and the cultural connotations of words and phrases in common situations in the target culture;
- To stimulate learners intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people, which will enable them to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalization.

Many attempts have been made to work out activities in order to promote cross-cultural interaction; they deal with cognitive as well as affective aspects of cultural awareness. Each activity offers such things: recognizing cultural images and symbols, working with cultural products, examining cultural behavior and patterns of communication, exploring values and attitudes, and others. The first group contains activities designed to encourage learners to explore the concept of culture itself by familiarizing themselves with popular images and symbols, expressed in personalities, architectural features, landscape, popular music and songs. Familiarity with these images help to feel more confident and to become more fluent. The second are based on realia: souvenirs, cartoons, travelogues, money, photographs, newspapers, news on radio and TV. These are to allow scope for personal involvement and the opportunity to express a personal response to the cultural environment. The following activities are intended to reveal information about lifestyles current in English-speaking cultures and the patterns usually followed in the common situations as a part of normal everyday experience: every culture offers distinct options and exhibits distinct patterns associated with areas of everyday life. Culturally different patterns of communication are a common cause of misunderstanding and can be a source of discomfort in cross-cultural situations. Learners need not only to recognize the different cultural patterns at work in the behavior of native speakers, they also have to become aware of the ways in which their own cultural background influences their own behaviour, and to develop tolerance for behaviour patterns that are different from their own. For this reason, we include not only information-oriented activities, which present facts about cultural appropriateness, but also activities oriented towards the growth of self-awareness.

We suggest that the scope of a program in terms of the mentioned above features and activities is best displayed in a format, which provides environments where identities are manifested:

- Identity factors: nation, locality, generation, gender, class, race and ethnicity;
- Contexts: Arts, Media, family, leisure, education, work, politics, law.

In this respect, language is the medium through and which creates societal meaning. It is important to study how language varies according to the contexts in which it is used, in terms of vocabulary, discourse patterning and grammar. Language itself is so fundamental to the construction of individual and social identity that it should be central to the concerns of such a program.

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