NOTIONS OF CULTURE, CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Andijon state institute of foreign languages
Faculty of foreign language and literature
*3-kurs talabalari **Abduqodirova Zulayho** va **Asqarova Mavluda***
*Teacher: **Ganiyeva Tohira***

Аннотация: В этой статье исследуется важность понимания различных культур и управления ими в современном взаимосвязанном мире. В нем обсуждается влияние культуры на человеческое поведение, отношения и убеждения, подчеркивая необходимость признания и уважения культурных различий, а также признания общих черт. Концепция межкультурной компетентности представлена как необходимая для эффективного взаимодействия с людьми разного происхождения, подчеркивая важность адаптации стилей общения в соответствии с культурными нормами. В конечном счете, в статье подчеркиваются преимущества развития межкультурной компетентности в нашем все более глобализированном обществе.

Abstract: This article explores the importance of understanding and navigating different cultures in today's interconnected world. It discusses the impact of culture on human behavior, attitudes, and beliefs, highlighting the need to recognize and respect cultural differences while also acknowledging commonalities. The concept of intercultural competence is presented as essential for effectively engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of adapting communication styles to align with cultural norms. Ultimately, the article emphasizes the advantages of developing intercultural competence in our increasingly globalized society.

Ключевые слова: понятия культуры, межкультурная осведомленность, межкультурная компетентность, коммуникация, культурное разнообразие, глобализированное общество, разнообразное происхождение, взаимосвязанный мир.

Keyword: notions of culture, cross-cultural awareness, intercultural competence, communication, cultural diversity, globalized society, diverse backgrounds, interconnected world.

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a tool for expressing feelings, emotions, thoughts, needs, and desires through words, symbols, and gestures. It encompasses verbal and physical forms of communication and is considered a fundamental aspect of human interaction. Culture, on the other hand, encompasses the characteristics of a specific group of people, including language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. Language serves as a manifestation of culture; therefore, learning a new language without understanding its cultural context is incomplete. Moreover, cultivating intercultural communication competence is integral to enhancing critical thinking skills, with these two concepts being closely intertwined in language teaching.[1]

In foreign language curricula, preparing learners to engage appropriately and effectively in intercultural relationships is a central focus. The concept of critical cultural awareness, embedded within the framework of intercultural communicative competence, encourages language educators to design learning experiences that help learners recognize the connections between classroom instruction and real-world issues while engaging in critical thinking throughout the learning process. While research, such as that by Byram (1997, 2012), has underscored the significance of critical cultural awareness, there is limited literature demonstrating how it can be fostered in a classroom environment while striving for language proficiency.

Effective communicators must be able to adapt to new environments and manage feelings of "culture shock," such as frustration and alienation, that arise in unfamiliar situations.

To be competent in intercultural communication, individuals must understand the social customs and systems of the host culture, as this knowledge is crucial for effective communication.

In intercultural communication, it's important to recognize the strong connection between culture and communication. The way people perceive communication—its nature, how it's conducted, and its purposes—is deeply rooted in their culture. Forgetting this connection can lead to misunderstandings between individuals from different cultures.[2]

Western and Asian cultures often face significant misunderstandings due to their differing views on communication. Western cultures, particularly the United States, place higher importance on the speaker or source of information than on the receiver, the person receiving the information. In contrast, Asian cultures view communication as a cooperative effort to create meaning, reflecting their collectivist

values, where maintaining relationships through communication can be more important than the information exchanged.

In intercultural communication, people are typically aware of potential misunderstandings and seek to avoid them. However, despite these efforts, serious misunderstandings and conflicts can occur, partly because people make ethical judgments as they communicate. These values influence their communication decisions and how they interpret others' messages.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Western and Asian cultures often clash in terms of ethics. For instance, an individual with a Confucian view might see giving gifts to business associates or hiring relatives as acceptable, as these actions help maintain social relationships. However, in the United States, these actions could be viewed as bribery and nepotism, both of which are illegal. Such differences in ethics can lead to conflicts, highlighting the need for ethical intercultural communicators to understand, respect, and accept each other's ethical perspectives.[3]

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior, attitudes, preferences, and beliefs. In today's interconnected world, cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence are essential for effective communication and collaboration across cultural boundaries. Understanding the concepts of culture, cross-cultural awareness, and intercultural competence is vital for anyone seeking to engage successfully in intercultural interactions. Culture is defined as a shared set of beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, and practices that characterize a group of people. These shared characteristics are passed down from generation to generation and influence how people think, behave, and communicate. Cultural elements can include language, religion, customs, traditions, food, and clothing, among others. Culture can vary significantly from one region, country, or social group to another, and the differences between cultures can be substantial.

Cross-cultural awareness involves recognizing and appreciating the differences and similarities between various cultures. It entails gaining an understanding of different cultural perspectives and how they influence behavior and communication. This awareness is crucial in intercultural interactions as it enables individuals to acknowledge and respect cultural differences, thereby avoiding misunderstandings. On the other hand, intercultural competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate and interact with individuals from diverse cultures. It encompasses skills, knowledge, and attitudes that facilitate interaction with different cultural groups. These competencies may include understanding cultural norms,

communication patterns, showing empathy, and valuing cultural diversity. Intercultural competence enables individuals to engage successfully in intercultural interactions, preventing conflicts arising from cultural differences. [4]

An integral aspect of intercultural competence involves adapting communication styles to align with cultural norms. For instance, while direct communication may be valued in one culture, indirect communication might be preferred in another. Furthermore, non-verbal communication norms can vary across cultures, necessitating sensitivity and adaptability. Developing intercultural competence requires flexibility, recognition of cultural diversity, and appropriate navigation of cultural differences.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a framework aimed at preparing foreign language students for meaningful interactions with individuals from other cultures. It focuses on developing the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for effective intercultural communication. The literature emphasizes the importance of equipping students to interact appropriately and effectively with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds and worldviews. To achieve this, teachers are advised to design language lessons that encourage students to reflect on their beliefs about the target culture and engage in active inquiry about its products, practices, and perspectives.

Once attitudes and knowledge have been addressed, students should engage in tasks that enhance their intercultural skills, such as analysis, interpretation, communication, and interaction with the target culture. Byram (1997) defines critical cultural awareness (CCA) as the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures. To develop CCA in the classroom, teachers should provide opportunities for students to practice critical evaluation. This requires educators to consider age-appropriate methods of learning so that students can learn to evaluate the practices, products, and perspectives of the target culture.

A crucial initial step in building CCA is allowing students time to identify and reflect upon their preconceived ideas, judgments, and stereotypes about individuals from the target culture.

As foreign language learners progress towards critical awareness, teachers should design activities that prompt students to consider new values and beliefs based on factual discoveries made during the research process (Galloway, 1998). An effective approach for this type of intercultural learning involves cooperative investigation, where learners collaboratively steer their learning direction while the teacher serves as a guide throughout the discovery process. It's crucial for teachers

not to impose their personal viewpoints on students but rather create an environment of open inquiry, allowing students to independently uncover the origins of their judgments or stereotypes. A significant role of foreign language teachers is to facilitate communication across cultural barriers, and tackling stereotypes is one of the most challenging barriers to overcome. Encouraging the development of critical cultural awareness (CCA) is a way for teachers to guide students in deconstructing stereotypes and prejudice in the classroom.[5]

To conclude the study on critical thinking or incidents, teachers could organize a question and answer session with a panel of guest speakers from various English-speaking countries and regions. In preparation for the panel, learners can compose questions in English to ask during the session. The teacher acts as the moderator, guiding the discussion and drawing connections to the information students have gathered regarding stereotypes. The aim of this session is to shed light on the diverse experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of Spanish speakers, highlighting that stereotypes often oversimplify culture and overlook its multifaceted nature. Furthermore, this activity provides students with the opportunity to engage with English speakers, positively impacting their perceptions of the English language and further enhancing their critical cultural awareness. Additionally, since most of the lesson would be conducted in the target language, students have the chance to improve both their listening and speaking skills by practicing English vocabulary and grammar in an authentic setting.

CONCLUSION

In order to design impactful lessons that prompt students to engage in deeper thinking about the intercultural interactions in their everyday lives, foreign language educators should integrate critical cultural awareness as an extension of intercultural communicative competence into their curricula. By doing so, students will gain a better understanding of the subtleties inherent in different cultures, thus enabling them to participate more effectively and appropriately in intercultural relationships.

In summary, an understanding of culture, cross-cultural awareness, and intercultural competence is essential for successful engagement in intercultural interactions. Developing cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence involves recognizing and appreciating cultural differences and similarities, acquiring cultural knowledge, and honing skills to communicate and interact effectively across cultures. Intercultural competence necessitates flexibility, adaptability, and respect for cultural diversity to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts stemming from cultural differences. With the world becoming increasingly interconnected, the

ability to navigate intercultural interactions is becoming more crucial, and individuals who cultivate intercultural competence will have a significant advantage in the globalized world.

REFERENCES

1. Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

2. Byram, M. (2012). Language awareness and (critical) cultural awareness - relationships, comparisons and contrasts. Language Awareness, 21(1-2), 5-13

3. Galloway, V. (1998). Constructing cultural realities: "Facts" and frameworks of association. In J. Harper, M. Lively,& M. Williams (Eds.), The Coming of Age of the Profession: Emerging Issues in the Teaching of Foreign Languages(pp. 129-140). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

4.Brislin R. and Cushner K.Intercultural Interactions:A Practical Guide. 2nd Edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1996

5.Geertz, Clifford.The Interpretation of Cultures. New York. Basic Books, 1973.