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Basic approaches to building reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of teaching foreign languages in the framework of globalization and integration. It provides an overview of the main characteristics of adequate approaches to prepare for cross-cultural communication focusing on the complex nature of the

process of learning a foreign language, which should be studied in the unity of such components as methods and approaches, activities and real life scenarios, audio and visual aids, collaborative work, authenticity, activation of all language skill areas and positive attitude. The authors consider building the reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication with the help of systems, axiological, cross-cultural and reflective approaches as an effective means of optimization of the process of training cross-cultural communication. The authors formulated the main problems that should be solved during the study, namely: 1) terminology classification; 2) investigating the nature of the learning object; 3) eliciting unsolved issues and finding ways to solve them. Methodology of systems, axiological, intercultural and reflective approaches is used in the research. As long as the main concept of the axiological approach is value, it allows the authors to identify a set of priority values in education, upbringing and self-development. Intercultural approach is closely connected with reflection which is the basic element of constructing understanding between people of different cultures and languages. The authors come to the conclusion that reflection should be put into the core of the intercultural communication and that it is necessary to study the application of the approaches mentioned.

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Keywords

Globalization, cross-cultural communication approach, systems approach, axiological approach, cross-cultural/intercultural approach, reflection, reflective approach, reflective model.

Introduction

The complexity and dynamics of development and functioning of the sphere of modern language education in the context of globalization and integration makes all its individuals new requirements. The necessity of forming ability to adequate cross-cultural communication became the burning issue to have a sufficient level of foreign language communicative competence in any sphere.

Studying the problem of training cross-cultural communication in theory and practice at higher school, we came to a conclusion that this process requires single-minded efforts to optimize it.

Purpose

We are supposed to find ways and means to optimize the preparation of cross-cultural communication in interpersonal and professional fields. Based on this point, we set a goal to create

a reflective model to optimize the process of training cross-cultural communication. The choice of theoretical and methodological approaches is a determining mechanism in solving this problem.

Materials and methods of research

Being the most important attribute of any pedagogical research, theoretical and methodological approaches will help us to identify a set of strategic directions, which provide a solution to a number of problems, including the following:

- Sorting of research terminology
- Defining new features and properties of the learning object
- Identification of unknown points of the problem
- Determining the prospects to develop the searching areas and science in general.

English methodologist A. Anthony in 1963 introduced the term approach to learning into scientific use to designate basic points used by a researcher about a language nature and ways of mastering this language [Anthony, 1963].

We agree with E. Yakovlev and N. Yakovlev in terms of nowadays understanding approach as a complex of paradigmatic, syntagmatic and pragmatic structures and mechanisms in knowledge and practices that characterize each other strategies and programs in science, politics or organization of human life [Yakovlev, 2010, 40].

The field of linguistics and teaching in the 20th century is marked by the development of different foreign language teaching methods and approaches. Some have no or small following and others are widely used. Although modern foreign language teaching has adopted completely new methods and approaches, the work of language professionals in the period between 1950 and 1980 contributed significantly to scientific views in the field of second language teaching and learning.

The most effective approach for teaching foreign language as a communicative one is a well-balanced combination of diverse methods and approaches with activities, use of real life scenarios and visual aids, group work, native English language samples, practice in all four language skill areas, and positive attitude. All these components are considered to be a part of every lesson as basic approach to teaching English.

In order to teach cross-cultural communication in any sphere is supposed to be effective in terms of systems, competence-based, axiological, cross-cultural, reflective, and some other approaches. Each of these approaches indicates what aspect of the object under study is taken into consideration. The most productive idea to search this or that object is to use complementary complex of approaches.

Having analyzed the variety of approaches to teaching English, we chose systems, axiological, cross-cultural and reflective ones to construct the reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication.

We would like to dwell on the general options of the chosen approaches.

As a general scientific level of our research work, we selected a systems approach, which will provide a comprehensive study of the problem of preparation for cross-cultural communication and allow considering this process as a pedagogical system.

The basic concept system is directly related to the implementation of the systems approach. In our research system means a coherent set of elements, characterized by the following features:

- Limiting the set of elements from the environment;
- The existence of the relationship between the elements;
- Interaction between the elements themselves;

The existence of elements separately because of the existence of the whole.

Systems approach helped us to formulate its ideas in relation to the problem of constructing the reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication:

The process of training for cross-cultural communication is a sub-system of teaching foreign language within all types of education – schools, high schools, post-graduates. It helps to realize educational process taken into consideration didactic pedagogical principles.

Reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication as a pedagogical system reveals components and backbone links of adequate intercultural communication phenomenon.

The effectiveness of the process of preparation for intercultural communication depends on the system impacts to optimize the process itself.

Theoretical and practical orientation of axiological approach corresponds to the idea of humanization of education. Axiological approach advocates a person as the highest value. A person should be educated and education should be humanistic – this is evaluative imperative of humanization of education.

Axiological approach has quite a long story of its development: axiology basics were founded by Plato and Socrates, later I. Kant, M. Weber, W. Windelband dealt with the problem of values. French philosopher P. Lapie introduced the term axiology in 1902 [Lapie, 1902, 400]. S.Z. Goncharov, I.I. Dokuchaev, M.S. Kagan [Kagan, 1997, 205], D.A. Leontiev [Leontiev, 2000, 409; Leontiev, 2003, 487] and others were developing axiological approach in different periods. Nowadays axiological approach is not only philosophical notion, but it is used in sociology, psychology, pedagogy, culture and other scientific fields.

Axiological approach is a principle orientation of research regarding phenomenon from the point of view of values linked with the opportunities to satisfy people's needs. The main axiological principles are as following:

- Equality of all philosophical views within a single system of humanistic values to maintain the diversity of their cultural and ethnic peculiarities;
- Traditions, customs and creativity differences, acknowledgement of the need to study and use teachings of the past and the possibility of discoveries in present and future;
- Equality of people; pragmatism instead of arguing about backgrounds of values; dialogue rather than indifference or denial each other.

The basic concept of axiological approach is value. Nowadays the term turned out to be interdisciplinary phenomenon, integrating knowledge about society development and requiring attracting different sciences to its study.

I.T. Frolov in his Dictionary of Philosophy determines value as a specific social definition of objects of the world, reveals positive or negative value for an individual and society [Философский словарь, 2001, 646].

The value of axiological approach to construct a reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication is to determine the nature of global values, their origin, the mechanism of formation of personal values according to the norms of the world culture. To implement axiological approach for realizing the reflective model to prepare for intercultural communication allows us to identify a set of priority values in education, upbringing and self-development.

For the last decades English has become a very essential language all over the world. In Russia it is currently the most frequently taught foreign language nowadays and when we speak about its importance, we should think how to help learners to achieve foreign language communicative competence. Linguistic creativity much depends on how language is used by the speakers in relation to local contextual purposes and especially for interpersonal interaction. One of the main difficulties is whether a non-native speaker uses appropriate words and expressions in the given context or if he tries to translate them from his native language into English. It confuses a listener due to the lack of the common ground between their cultures. There is nothing wrong in it, but somehow native speakers know that they would not express themselves in quite that way.

Culture and language are means of collective co-existence and social practice kept in the memory of the society that is created by the people during the centuries. Cultural awareness helps people to become more understanding and tolerant of behaviors, which are different from their own.

Difference between cultures causes some misunderstandings in the interactive communication between a foreigner and a native-speaker. Globalization made people closer, narrowed borders between countries, men started collaborating in different spheres of their life and they all need to communicate in some way. They need to acquire not only linguistic competence but cultural awareness as well. Cross-cultural investigations can provide materials that assist language learners to deal with the problems of unknown environments. The native speaker puts in language his world vision, mentality, and the relation to other people in cross-cultural dialogue, and the non-native speaker receives that vision. It is clear that there is a difference between the native and the non-native speakers' focus when they evaluate an oral discourse. The former focuses on the vocabulary related to the cultural and social factors. On the other hand, the latter lacks the ability to consider such factors. This is one of the major problems of the non-native speakers at both production and comprehension. Language and culture exist in each individual. That individual is a thinker, a creator, a transmitter of the culture, he is the part of the society, and he uses the language for communication with other members of this society where he is supposed to be understood as they belong to the same community. However, the indispensable condition of realization of any

communication is that a speaker and a listener should have a mutual knowledge of realities or the background knowledge as a basis of a language interaction to understand each other.

New socio-cultural environment shifted teaching English as a grammatical structure to a cultural awareness. There are numerous works of foreign scientists, who developed the idea of intercultural approach (G. Heinrici, H.J. Krumm, D. Roesler, etc.) as well as investigations of Russian researchers devoted to teaching foreign language in the framework of cross-cultural or intercultural approach I.I. Khaleeva, V.P. Furmanova [Furmanova, 1993, 122], G.V. Elizarova [Elizarova, 2005, 352], etc. They consider the dominant of intercultural approach is its ability to analyze and compare the features of different cultures. Being logical continuation of cultural studies approaches, intercultural approach has the main idea to prepare for adequate intercultural communication. In this case language becomes an instrument of cross-cultural dialogue, an effective tool for implementing professional communicative intentions of specialists associated with interaction of other culture, country, and society.

It becomes obvious that intercultural approach closely linked with the reflection. Each time when non-native speaker compares his culture with strange to him, he reflects his behavior, manners, style of speech.

Reflective practice is important to the development of a person; it enables him to learn from his own life experience further. Many courses nowadays ask students to reflect their learning, though not all of them understand what this really means, why it is useful and how to do it.

The term reflection came into the Russian language from English (reflection – an idea or opinion or statement resulting from deep and careful thought). Today we can say for sure that the concept and the term reflection has already become one of the most popular and frequent in many scientific publications, directly or indirectly related to the development of educational system as a whole and its individual subsystems. According to D. Boud, reflection is essential for learning because it goes through the same stages when we want to get an experience, namely "...recapture experience, think, mull over and evaluate it" [Hall Boud, Keogh, Walker, 1985, 43]. Over the last decades quite a lot of domestic and foreign scholars related to reflection appeared both in psychology and pedagogy (M. Wallace [Wallace, 1995, 180], Gore [Gore, 1987, 33-39], Hatton, I.A. Zimnyaya [Zimnyaya, 2004, 384], B.D. Elkonin, etc.

The reason of a great attention to reflection is in the modern society changes, which have occurred due to the integration and globalization. These changes have a huge impact on the mentality, understanding of the priority tasks of human development and hence on the model of men's general education and vocational training. In this context reflexive thinking comes to the first place and its formation and development becomes integral tasks at any level of education as a whole.

Conclusion

Teaching foreign languages is always at the forefront of modern trends of education. The problem of the formation of reflective thinking in teaching foreign languages is not an exception.

Reflective activities integrate the design and research activities. Using a reflective approach in cross-cultural preparation optimizes the process of teaching foreign language and makes it dynamic. Optimization of teaching process goes through the implementation of the principle of the previous students' experience. To construct a reflective model of preparation for cross-cultural communication we consider reflection a starting point, a means and process of modeling private experience as well as foreign one to intercultural communication adequately, emotional and sensual sphere of communication, and the search for alternative solutions and algorithms for their implementations.

To sum up the above we would focus on the idea of a set of different approaches to building Reflective Model of preparation for cross-cultural communication, their complexity, mutual interference, and application for effective implementation of this very Model.

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Основные подходы конструирования рефлексивной модели подготовки к кросс-культурной коммуникации

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Аннотация

В статье исследуется проблема обучения иностранным языкам в контексте процессов глобализации и интеграции. Авторы делают обзор основных подходов, необходимых

при подготовке к кросс-культурной коммуникации, выделяют компоненты эффективного процесса обучения иностранным языкам в современном мире, такие как методы и подходы, активизирующие различные виды деятельности задания, ситуации из жизни, различные аудио- и видео-средства, групповая работа, аутентичность языкового материала и способ подачи языкового материала, позитивный настрой.

В статье формулируются основные проблемы исследования, а именно: 1) анализ и классификация терминологии исследования; 2) определение новых характеристик объекта изучения; 3) выделение неизученных вопросов проблемы и очерчивание перспектив развития области исследования и науки в целом. В своем исследовании авторы опираются на комплекс подходов, таких как системный, аксиологический, межкультурный и рефлексивный. Анализ исследований позволили выявить, что в основе межкультурного общения лежит рефлексия, позволяющая приблизиться к пониманию иной культуры и выработать свое поведение и реакцию на аутентичное высказывание.

Авторы приходят к заключению, что для успешной подготовки к межкультурной коммуникации необходимо создать и реализовать рефлексивную модель на основе вышеперечисленных подходов и детально изучить их во взаимодействии друг с другом.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Глобализация, кросс-культурная коммуникация, системный подход, аксиологический подход, рефлексивная модель.

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