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MULTIMEDIA IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG ESL STUDENTS: CULTURAL ASPECT

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Badan A.A., Nedainova I.V., Akopiants N.M. MULTIMEDIA IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG ESL STUDENTS: CULTURAL ASPECT

This article presents the results of the use of multimedia tools in the development of communicative competencies in terms of enhancing the cultural aspect in the process of teaching English to students who study it as a foreign language. Special attention is paid to the consideration of specific examples of the use of multimedia by teachers of the department of business foreign language and translation of the National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute".

Key words: multimedia technologies, communicative competence, cultural aspect, learner-centered approach, ESL students.

В данной статье отображены результаты применения мультимедийных средств в развитии коммуникативных компетенций с точки зрения усиления культурологического аспекта в процессе обучения английскому языку студентов, изучающих его как иностранный. Особое внимание уделяется рассмотрению конкретных примеров использования мультимедиа преподавателями кафедры делового иностранного языка и перевода Национального Технического Университета «Харьковский Политехнический Институт».

Ключевые слова: мультимедийные технологии, коммуникативная компетенция, культурологический аспект, личностно-ориентированный подход, студенты, изучающие английский как иностранный.

Стаття присвячена застосуванню мультимедійних технологій в процесі розвитку комунікативної компетентності серед студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, з точки зору культурного аспекту. Автори статті розглядають історичні передумови виникнення такого поняття як мультимедіа, аналізують етапи його розвитку, виділяють місце в сучасній педагогіці, а також відзначають його значення у сучасній методології навчання та викладання іноземної мови. Мультимедіа розглядається як складна система інформаційних технологій, які функціонують як ефективний механізм, для навчання студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, бути культурно-компетентними та розумітися в національних відмінностях. Особлива увага приділяється розгляду конкретних прикладів впровадження інформаційних технологій на кафедрі ділової іноземної мови та перекладу Національного технічного університету «Харківський політехнічний інститут». Автори проаналізували спеціальні зразки завдань, спрямованих на максимальне залучення студентів до навчального процесу за допомогою впровадження мультимедійних засобів для формування їхньої (студентської) міжкультурної компетентності. Загалом, такі підходи, як перевірка знань за допомогою мобільних та комп'ютерних додатків, проведення вебінарів, підготовка проектів у вигляді презентацій, відвідування кінотеатрів з кураторами груп для перегляду фільмів англійською мовою, організація публічних виступів з використанням мультимедіа та реалізація ідей віртуального вчителя розглядаються авторами як найбільш інноваційними та ефективними.

Ключові слова: мультимедійні технології, комунікативна компетенція, культурологічний аспект, особистісно-орієнтований підхід, студенти, що вивчають англійську мову як іноземну.

Introduction. The all-embracing globalization of the late XXth–early XXIst centuries has changed the forms and methods of teaching in all aspects. In Ukraine, the approaches to teaching foreign languages have undergone some of the most significant changes due to two factors. The first one can be explained by the fall of the "iron curtain", which isolated Ukraine from the world at the time as it was a part of the USSR, and that fall gave the access to the massive use of the courses developed by language speakers. The second factor lies in the rapid development of information technologies that has changed the globe and, at the same time, opened the window on the western world with its opportunity to speak the foreign language. All these have led to the rejection of artificial learning, when learners were not able to listen to authentic speech and then the focus of attention moved from reading and grammar to listening and speaking: people usually remember only 10% of what they read, but 50% of what they hear and see [13, p. 112].

Today the importance of using multimedia technologies in the classroom is obvious. It is first of all in its distinct advantages over the traditional teaching methods and among the main functions of multimedia one can point out the "immersion" of the student in a real English-speaking environment, which is one of the ways to simulate life situations of a foreign language environment in Ukraine. Because of the growing role of speaking in a foreign language communication, the implementation of multimedia and the role of innovative methods for improving skills in listening and speaking will be growing ever more, the authors of this article aim to reveal some important aspects of the introduction of these technologies in the process of classroom group training not only for teaching the ESL, but focusing on the cultural component while teaching English.

The purpose of implementing multimedia technologies in developing communicative competences among ESL students in terms of the cultural aspect is also to overcome some unconscious ethnic and cultural stereotypes, and, taking advantage of the latest technical means potential, to provide insight to understanding the disparities in the global society.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The generally accepted opinion in methodological academic community is that learning a foreign language is impossible without knowing people's culture the language of which is being learnt, as well as a language can be better acquired with understanding the norms of the cultural

society in which this language functions [1; 6; 11; 12; 13; 15]. Such an understanding forms the intercultural competence of a second language speaker, who by his nature, has a completely different from a language bearer emotional, cognitive and behavioral orientation in the surrounding world. These orientations are usually reflected in such normative categories as nationality, race, ethnicity, etc. [18]. As N. Saienko sees it, in terms of the communicative and learner-centered approaches the learning process should be targeted on the formation of a clearly defined set of competences, both language and professional ones, and on the development of students' cognitive abilities and psychological qualities which underlie and optimise an intercultural communication [17, p. 5]. Intercultural interactions are equivalent to intergroup communication, but at the same time people enter into relationships individually. Here it is important for a non-native speaker to be a competent participant in individual communication, an effective and all-round interlocutor in conversation spoken in a foreign social environment.

As V. Chuzhikov and L. Antonyuk stated in their survey "The social impact of the Ukrainian Eurointegration. The system of higher education", some ways of European experience can be a very useful contribution to the development of Ukrainian higher education teaching methods and among the others, they mention Blended Learning as using social networks and web hosts both in class and in extra curriculum activities; mobile means of communication, iPad and Alt-Tablets, that can be actively used in distance education and in-class work; the integrated use of interactive training resources like computers, an interactive whiteboard, a multimedia projector, a Web camera, etc.; gamification as simulation of real world situations or behavior in some virtual world [8, p. 7]. According to this survey and other resources in which the variety of technological means and their advantages for teaching foreign languages is described [2; 3; 4; 5; 13; 16; 19], the future will bring the supremacy of blended learning, i. e. teaching preferences will be given to E-learning rather than to the traditional one. On this controversial matter we will only make a remark that the combinatorial set of these two forms of learning/ teaching is strongly dependent on the subject that is being learnt/taught: we are of the opinion that teaching grammar, for instance, needs more traditional form of teaching than speaking or Country study.

Setting the objectives. Given this, the purpose of the article is to research and analyze ways of



implementing multimedia technologies in developing communicative competences among ESL students in terms of the cultural aspect, which allow to make educational process at the tertiary level more effective, based on the teaching experience at Business Foreign Language and Translation Department, National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute".

Methods. As the subject matter of our study is the increase of students' cultural awareness through getting as much information on the theme as possible, the teachers only plan and direct the language learners' efforts observing and evaluating the feedback. We can terminize such an approach to teaching as peer-to-peer method as far as the students' activities are observed on a reciprocal basis. During our research we have also used such methods as system, inductive, deductive methods; interpretation of research results; analysis and synthesis of the pedagogical literature.

Results and discussion of the research.

According to the developed strategies of learning, teaching and evaluating of western universities, study programmes must meet the requirements of society and incorporate innovative elements, first of all, using information and communication technologies [7, p. 69].

Global strategies for informational support in all spheres of our life, and in particular, in education, have led to the need to adapt education to teaching foreign languages. The researchers of these processes emphasize the importance of analyzing the coexistence and interpenetration of at least two existing forms of the present education – traditional and electronic ones [3; 7; 9; 14].

The benefits of E-learning for the teacher himself are to use the electronic possibilities for the student to achieve the highest rate of efficiency per minute in listening, pronunciation and intonation training. Finally, these benefits will lead to the student's improved speaking skills, since listening and speaking are paired aspects of learning. In Ukraine there are several stages of penetration of E-learning into foreign languages teaching: the first of these was the attempt to make the classroom fitted with computers that have appeared to be expensive and inefficient. Today the educational community is turning to more effective multimedia technologies with the use of projector machines and plasma TVs, where the last named are used in combination with flash drives, and it is clear that the use of the Internet resources is more adapted to group work than personal computers. At the same time not all of the mentioned can be regarded as the

effective tools in classroom training. So, among the plethora of different tools (Internet resources, social networks, webinars, video conferencing, websites, Youtube, interactive videos, e-mails, etc.) only media (plasma TVs in combination with projection machines and Internet-resources) is the most effective and available means for systematic and constant use on a regular basis [9; 10].

Due to the years' previous experience of E-learning implementation into foreign languages teaching Business Foreign Languages and Translation department at National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" concentrates the faculty's effort on using plasma TVs as the most cost-effective tool for teamwork and on trying to engage both traditional and E-learning forms of learning as much impactful as possible in the ESL classroom. The better hands of these two together lead to the practice of using multimedia technologies in the above-mentioned department to influence the student's attendance of classroom lessons, his interest in the presence and participation in group and individual projects. Among other advantages, as the students themselves point out, is the increase of the student's attention and motivation for his training, the change of the emotional state into a more workable and optimistic, and, most importantly, an increase in the self-esteem of each student as a participant in a real English-speaking situation. The teachers of the department try to connect classroom activities with the out-of-class world where our students are very skillful to use all the forms of E-learning and the combination of the methods here lies in students' engagement in project self-learning work that afterwards is presented in the classroom using multimedia devices. This is the way the methodology of teaching tends to be transformed in favour of E-learning and takes place in two spheres – the out-of-class efforts of students and the result of it in the form of multimedia presentations which can be regarded as synthesis of traditional and multimedia technologies in the classroom activity.

Since the methodological basis of teaching at Business Foreign Languages and Translation Department of NTU "KhPI" is the focus on maximizing the involvement of students into the educational process with the help of implementing multimedia techniques, in this part of the article we will share the experience how with E-learning we try to form intercultural competence among Computer Technologies Faculty students, who study English for specific purposes. Taking into consideration that the students that study English as their minor as a rule do not possess

much cultural background information, the task of the teacher in this perspective primarily lies in enriching their vocabulary with modern lexical units that can help the learners to expand the range of general knowledge about the other cultures representatives and acquire communication skills in a multinational world. That is why in the classroom we pay particular attention to the topic "Cultural Competence - A key competence of the 21st century". Note that the classroom is equipped with a big screen plasma TV and a whiteboard.

Not long after the course beginning when the teacher realizes the ESL level of the group and each student respectively, there comes the discussion starting from the simple question: *What are race, ethnicity, culture?* The learners try to explain these concepts and describe the associations connected with them having already had a personal vocabulary each. Then having in mind the different foreign language command of the class, the students are divided into groups (skillful and poor learners together). They are shown the pictures with the people of different ethnics on the board and are asked to match the pictures to the words from the list and translate them: *Race/Ethnicity: 1. African-American. 2. White. 3. African. 4. Latino. 5. Asian. 6. Native American. 7. East Indian. 8. Arab. 9. Middle Easternю 10. Gypsy.* The follow-up discussion contains the talk on the race prejudices that can exist in the world and in Ukraine in particular. Afterwards the students watch the video "Why cultural competence is a key competence of the 21-st century" [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsbRMMAYZOU>] 2 times: for getting the general understanding and then to answer the following questions in a written form: *What are the factors that lead to diversity in people and interaction?; What factors influence general increase of pressure and complexity?; What is cultural competence in the 21-st century?* The methodological task for this is to combine listening and spelling activities for students to remember the key words on the topic. Then having compared the answers and discussed them the individual task for the next class is to do a 5-minute presentation "Ethnic and cultural stereotypes" using the You-Tube, Facebook or any other social network content and posing 3-5 questions on the video.

Another stage of forming a cultural competence of ESL students can be a stage of lesson when the students are engaged in watching the video "Cultural Competency Continuum" [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNUx-wHh7j8>]. The video has no audio, only captions

that show the 6 levels of forming a cultural competence in detail (cultural destruction, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetency, cultural competency and cultural proficiency). Having watched the video for 2 times with the permit to make notes, the learners are asked to present their own understanding of basic concepts of cultural competence like cultural awareness, cultural respect, cultural responsiveness, cultural safety, cross-cultural practice and care, self-reflection). After the discussion the students are divided into teams and have a role-play: *You are a business unit manager and there are people of different nationalities in your section. Organize an out-of-work party asking your colleagues to present the peculiarities of their culture (get ready to tell about yours).* In this activity students are reminded to use the knowledge from their previous video presentations on Ethnical and cultural stereotypes.

The significant role in implementing information technologies in foreign language communicative competencies development in terms of cultural aspect is also played by the way in which extracurricular activities are organized at university. Among the most effective and modern, sometimes even innovative, forms of teaching foreign languages in terms of cultural aspect with the help of information technologies we can define the following:

- 1) **testing knowledge with the help of mobile and computer applications** which allows to make this process less time-consuming and more entertaining, and gives a comprehensive assessment;
- 2) **conducting webinars** as a part of an extra-curricular university activity via Google Hangouts on Air with the students of the correspondence course or future graduates within the program of occupational guidance for prospective students who are going to enter this department;
- 3) **making projects in the form of presentations** regarding topics in the curriculum;
- 4) **going to the cinema** arranged by curators of groups for watching films in English;
- 5) organizing **public performances with the usage of multimedia**;
- 6) implementing **the idea of the virtual teacher** in the educational process.

These information multimedia technologies are actively used in the educational process at the Business Foreign Languages and Translation Department of NTU "KhPI" when we deal with more profoundly prepared students those who are getting the degrees of bachelor and master



in Translation Studies. The authors will dwell on every format hereafter in more detail.

Testing knowledge with the help of mobile and computer apps can be an efficient tool of making students good at the cultural peculiarities of the English-speaking countries along with learning other aspects of language. For example, while conducting the course "The theory and practice of translation", when the students are considering the topic "Idioms", the teacher asks them to download the mobile application "English Idioms and Phrases". Except for direct learning idioms due to this application, students also gain insight into the cultural peculiarities of the English-speaking nation, obtain a deeper understanding of the cultural framework connected with traditions, social norms, laws and regulations, moral values and symbols. For example, the expression "Rain check" which is asked when the person cannot accept an invitation but asks for an opportunity to be invited on another date has deeper historical roots. This term dates back to 1880s and refers to baseball where this practice has come from and it lies in the practice to offer paying spectators a rain check allowing to come to the game next time if it has been cancelled or postponed because of the bad weather conditions. Later it transferred to other spheres of entertainment. This idiom does not only make the speech of students more eloquent turning them into full-fledged participants of the communication process but also gives an insight to the history of society and so called "culture of compensation". There are also other applications which can enhance the level of cultural awareness among EFL students and are focused on cultural aspect only, for instance, such as "Biographies of great men", "Google Arts and Culture", "6 Minute English", "English Poems" and others.

Along with this method we also use a wide range of webinars that are conducted via Google Hangouts on Air for the students of the correspondence course or for school-leavers within the program of occupational guidance for prospective students. One of the webinars was devoted to such an aspect of the national culture as cuisine of the English-speaking countries. During the class students watched the video "How to make a full English breakfast" [<http://www.englishexercises.org/makeagame/viewgame.asp?id=1724>], discussed it and did the tasks following the link. At the same class they were also demonstrated an episode from the program "Jamie's Food Revolution" featuring Jamie Oliver, a British renowned chef, who heads for Huntington, West Virginia, which has been called the unhealthiest city in

America, to teach people how to eat healthily [<http://www.englishexercises.org/makeagame/viewgame.asp?id=7427>]. Information technologies in such kind of an activity embrace the whole system of tools which a teacher and students can use while considering the topic, in our case concerning the cultural aspect. Google Hangouts on Air as an information technology allows up to 10 participants that makes up almost a group, other students can be listeners of this lesson and write their questions and comments on-line; participants are able to watch a synchronized video on YouTube; they have a remote access from home or any place where there is the Internet coverage; a teacher as well as any participant can share his screen demonstrating the important issues; broadcasting is recorded on YouTube and can be watched for revision afterwards, the links for the video of the lesson can be spread to even a wider group of people.

Another way of helping students understand a different culture is to assign projects in the form of presentations. Due to information technologies these presentations can be transmitted to a plasma TVset or shown in a bigger size with a projection machine. Visual aids will help to enhance the perceiving of presentations. Our students regularly prepare presentations on such topics as "Virtual tours across the USA/Great Britain", "Cities of the USA/Great Britain", "Art in the USA/Great Britain", "Sightseeings of the USA/Great Britain" and so on.

In addition to it, going to the cinema for watching films in English is also considered to be an irreplaceable part of an extra-curriculum activity to find out more about the different culture of the country whose language is being studied. The curators of groups organize the students at the Department of Business Foreign Language and Translation to go to the cinema. The technical facilities of the cinema hall are represented with a big screen, a specially adapted audio-system, a particular geometry of the hall, modern technologies 3D or IMAX which increase the productivity of perceiving and remembering the information. For example, the students are taken to the performances of the Royal National Theater which are broadcast on the big screens in the cinemas organized by British Council in Ukraine. Such performances as "Twelfth Night", "Macbeth", and "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare, "Angels in America, part one: Millenium approaches" and "Angels in America, part two: Perestroika" by Tony Kushner, "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" by Edward Albee make students more culturally competent.

Moreover, the students of the department take part in theatrical performances themselves. Annually the Theatre of English Miniatures is held at the department where learners of English stage classical works making it more vivid with the help of such media as a plasma TV set in combination with a projection machine. The staged plays of recent years such as "The Great Gatsby", "Pocahontas", "Gone with the wind" shed the light on the extensive historical and cultural background of different epochs and made students feel full-fledged participants of that cultural context with its values and traditions.

The last but not least in implementing information technologies in foreign language communicative competencies development in terms of cultural aspect is the idea of the presence of the virtual teacher during the class work. The students are shown the videos where there is a teacher who is a native speaker that explains them the topics meanwhile a real teacher in the classroom plays a role of a mediator commenting or helping with the subject of discussion. For example, we often use the videos from EngVid showing such lessons as "Cultural differences: an introduction", "Cultural differences between native speakers and English learners", "Culture: manners and how to be polite", "What not to do in England", "Good manners: what to say and do". After watching the students are supposed to take the tests on the Internet concerning the corresponding topic to check understanding. In the process of teaching cultural aspects of the language competence we also use videos with virtual teachers from "Rachel's channel" and "Let's talk – free English lessons" on YouTube, the site verbling.com, and so on.

Conclusions. As a result, we can see that foreign language communicative competences development while presenting the cultural aspect embraces the whole system of information technologies that functions as an effective mechanism to improve teaching and learning foreign languages. Some of the approaches in the educational process at Business Foreign Languages and Translation Department of NTU "KhPI" such as organizing the Theatre of English Miniatures, conducting webinars or the idea of the virtual teacher can be considered innovative. Information technologies definitely help to create a socially active, well-educated and intelligent personality and integrate this personality in the system of the world and national values. As the feedback to observe, at the end of the term each student has the task to write an essay "Understanding a foreign culture: my experience" and we can prove

that they can better understand the importance of being tolerant and having wide mental comprehension. Implementing information technologies as a mainstream, the faculty sees promising outlook in its methodological teaching advance for effective multicultural education of the students in simulated settings. Among the prospects of further research, we suggest that ways of implementing multimedia technologies in developing communicative competences among ESL students, which allow to make educational process at the tertiary level more effective should be further investigated not only in terms of the cultural aspect but also from the point of psychology and innovations in the methodological sphere.

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