CULTURAL AWARENESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Abstract. The study highlights the significance of integrating cultural approach into the foreign language teaching process. Culturalization of education has become one of the most urgent problems of education and can be tackled on the basis of respect of universal values, cultural pluralism, dialogue of cultures; social, cultural and humanitarian diversity esteem and concurrently awareness of strength in the unity of this diversity. Cultural approach expands research and practical application frameworks, provides a panoramic, multifaceted view and a polysystemic explanation of the essence of cultural problems, values and components of modern education. It is the cultural approach that puts a person at the pedestal, considering the individual capable of cherishing divergence and at the same time sustaining personal determination in any culture. The application of cultural approach in teaching English as a foreign language creates a favorable environment in which linguistic competence is an inseparable component of culture studies and vice versa. The key aspects of this approach in the learning process are: immersion in the cultural environment, intercultural communication, cultural projects, linguistic analysis with a cultural emphasis. The main accent is laid on the practical application of cultural approach in the study of a foreign language, with the emphasis on the compulsion to comprehend cultural aspects of speech and behavior. The study analyzes miscellaneous methods and strategies that contribute to better understanding, comprehension and implementation of cultural features in foreign language teaching and highlights the importance of cultural dialogue command and global thinking skills in the modern world.

The eminence of practical approach usage in foreign language teaching, which promotes a deeper understanding and respect for diverse cultures, with the application of authentic, relevant materials, beneficial for the development of intercultural communication skills, is strongly emphasized. This approach includes language acquisition via the apprehension of culture codes, mentality peculiarities as well as people's values, customs and traditions of the language under study and also encourages critical analysis and creative application of the acquired knowledge. Penetration into the material can be achieved through the analysis of works of
literature and art, in all their diversity of genres. The study underlines the paramount significance of cultural approach in foreign language teaching as a key to the development of language competence and cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** cultural approach, cultural consciousness, cultural awareness, foreign language teaching, linguistic competence, cultural competence.

**Problem statement.** In modern world realities, when society humanization processes acquire great weight, especially under the conditions of globalization and informational technological progress, the value of knowledge amplifies and a special emphasis is laid on quality education that meets all the current topical needs. In accordance with these requirements, quality education is recognized as "fully fulfilling its fundamental functions - a human-forming, personality-oriented, culturally appropriate, scientific and high-tech process" [1]. One of the key, fundamental principles of this approach is the need to endow education with the features of a culture-preserving and culture-creating process. So, the interest in the development of a cultural approach in education is caused by the desire to form an individual with relevant knowledge, skills and competences, as well as spiritual and moral qualities. It is the cultural approach that places a person in the epicenter as a free individual who is capable of personal determination in any culture. [1,8]. Cultural approach expands research horizons and applied methodological possibilities, provides a multidimensional vector and explanation of the essence of cultural phenomena, components, priorities and values of modern education.

This aspect of education is so important that it is singled out in the Pedagogical Constitution of Europe, where it is stated that teachers must nurture their own culture and treat other cultures with respect, form cross-cultural values[2].

V. Fryntsiuk notes that "cultural approach reveals the unity of axiological, active and individual-creative aspects of culture and considers an individual as its subject"[3]. In the context of modern educational paradigm, the main task of teaching/learning process is a holistic approach to the consideration of educational phenomena (in the case of language teaching - linguistic and cultural components), considering all participants in the educational process as sub entities that actively assimilate and disseminate culture.

The relationship between language and culture is undeniable: the evolution of language, determined by the requirements of modern society, affects cultural transformations, and, accordingly, any cultural changes are reflected on the language level. The main goal of learning foreign languages includes not only the development of interlingual communication skills, communicative abilities, but also a deep immersion in cultural features, as it is impossible to master a language without mastering the cultural context in which this language functions.

In the teaching process cultural approach provides a deeper understanding of cultural phenomena of one's own nation through comparison with foreign cultures.
It provides an opportunity to master universal values, understand the specifics of everyday life, traditions and customs of other peoples. This, of course, contributes to the improvement of the communicative competence of a linguistic personality and occurs through the prism of cultural awareness. In the process of teaching and learning foreign languages, it is impossible to avoid active incorporation of cultural aspects and cultural contexts.

The key is the concept of a close connection between the study of language and culture, emphasizing the significance of developing not only linguistic, but also cultural competences. This includes the acquisition and deep understanding of basic knowledge that integrates language and culture. Such knowledge involves: identification and understanding of key linguistic and cultural units, characterizing native speakers, their cultural saturation and position in the linguistic worldview; assimilation of these units closely related to the history, culture, ways of life, customs and mentality of people; actualization of these units in different socio-cultural contexts. The effectiveness of communication depends not only on linguistic competence, but also on the ability to adapt to cultural norms, etiquette, non-verbal forms of communication, and social norms, i.e. on cultural competence. Simply overcoming the language barrier is not enough for productive, efficient communication; a cultural barrier must also be overcome as well. Linguistic-cultural competence combines knowledge and skills: it covers generalized experience represented in language structures (words, phrases, idioms), including knowledge of history, traditions, customs, features of spoken language and everyday life, as well as the ability to analyze and creatively apply the acquired linguistic-cultural knowledge.

Analysis of recent research and publications. On the one hand, it can be stated that over the past half century, a significant number of publications focused on culturally oriented teaching of foreign languages have appeared in the printed matter. Some scholars express the opinion that this approach is gradually replacing the communicative one [4]. A detailed analysis of scientific literature [5] indicates that this idea is not quite correct. In fact, the communicative and culture-oriented approaches are not in conflict with each other, but, on the contrary, effectively complement each other, since the former focuses on teaching methods, while the latter focuses on the content part. There are also arguments [6] that emphasize that the communicative approach, being more flexible and universal [6; 7; 11, etc.], not only incorporates a culture-oriented approach [8], but also adapts it [9], which is reflected in modern trends in foreign language teaching [10].

Having analyzed the scientific and methodical literature, it can be identified that many scholars focused on the development of certain aspects of cultural approach in foreign language teaching. For example, L. Cameron, focused on the effectiveness of teaching foreign languages, I. Myazova, studies intercultural communication, F. Batsevich, studies communicative linguistics, E. Vereshchagin
and V. Kostomarov, are engaged in linguistic and regional studies, M. Bayram and M. Kramsch, focus on the communicative-ethnic direction, G. Neuner and V. Safonova, consider the socio-cultural direction, L. Serkiu, focused on the teaching of foreign languages in an intercultural context, A. Lidikout, L. Papadimitr, A. Scarino and M. Kohler, study the intercultural aspects of foreign language teaching, S. Radul, studies the formation of intercultural competence, and other researchers who are engaged in the use of authentic materials and methods of cultural analysis in the foreign language teaching.

On the other hand, there is a lack of publications that would clearly define the structural elements of the culture-oriented component in the framework of foreign language communicative teaching. Without a clear nomenclature and definition of these components, it is difficult to achieve their harmonious integration into the general communicative educational process of foreign languages. This creates certain difficulties in the structuring and practical application of a culture-oriented approach in the modern language education space.

The aim of the article is to identify the state of affairs in the study process of the problem matter, to analyze the content components of the English language teaching methodological culture formation, to highlight the importance of taking into account cultural approach in foreign language teaching through the prism of cultural consciousness; to consider the forms and methods that can be used in the of foreign language teaching via cultural approach implementation.

Methodology. The study presents the scientific works analysis conduct and experience generalization of cultural approach implementation in education, the development of practical advice in foreign language teaching, via the prism of cultural approach. The research employed the method of critical analysis of scientific and methodological literature, practical experience, and observation.

Results and discussions. Language is not a ready-made product that is learned passively, it is something variable in the heterogeneous multiplicity of facts of speech activity. Language is a social aspect of speech activity, and in relation to an individual, it is both external and internal. Language exists by agreement between members of a community. Each nation has its own language, which reflects its character, values, traditions, customs, etc. Language organizes the shared experience of all members of a particular language community. Such views were clearly formulated by the American linguist Whorf [4]. According to his hypothesis, language reflects the world view; is the prism through which speakers see the world. Thus, our world view is determined by the language we speak; the linguistic prism of perception is embedded in the consciousness and subconsciousness of native speakers. Using specific examples, linguists have shown the importance of verbal world modeling in different languages. The linguistic picture of the world is determined by lexical, grammatical and syntactic structures. Language functions (the primary one is communicative) not only enable speakers to exchange...
information, express thoughts, creating language messages, but also to model world pictures, since, according to Whorf’s hypothesis, each language has its own metaphysics, its own picture of the world, which is determined by the verbal composition of the language, as well as its grammatical and syntactic structure.

In the 20th century, the science of language expanded significantly and was replenished with new concepts. The phenomenon of human language has attracted the attention of philosophers and scholars since ancient times, and has changed according to the requirements of each epoch. New words and terms were introduced into the language and borrowed from other languages. This became especially noticeable in the 21st century, when business and the development of information and communication technologies became widespread. At present, many people covet to learn a foreign language, culture, and traditions in order to have the opportunity to efficiently communicate and prolifically collaborate with representatives of other nations. Since each language has its own realities, awareness and comprehension of the cultural peculiarities of the language under the consideration allows us to delve much deeper into the meaning of numerous phenomena. Understanding one's own culture and the culture of other nations helps to achieve intercultural competence and cultural awareness. Mastering a foreign language should appeal to cultural consciousness and awareness by means of cultural approach implementation in language teaching.

The development of cultural approach in foreign language teaching originates from the European education reform at the end of the 19th century, caused by socio-economic changes: the progress of production, science, technology, as well as state expansion, which contributed to the growth of exports and the expansion of international trade. This trend became particularly evident in the 21st century, when business deals, international politics and new information technologies have become widespread to such an extent that they have entered human mundane life. These changes have created a demand for international communication and foreign language specialists.

The elements of culture-oriented foreign language course component depend on the course objectives and on the understanding of the concept of "culture" in the context of the studied linguistic and cultural community. In the framework of national or language community culture consideration, there are two aspects:

Culture, covering the main civilizational achievements of a nation in the context of its historical development: literature, art, legislation, political system and other components.

Culture, which includes the behavioral norms of individuals who are part of a certain linguistic and cultural community, and who adhere to established standards of interaction and communication that have historically developed in that community.

The main objective of any practical foreign language course is the formation of students' foreign language and speech communicative competence, the key
component of which is linguistic and socio-cultural competence. This involves the ability to communicate in accordance with the socio-cultural norms that exist in the given linguistic and cultural community. In this regard we are talking about an integrated combination of both aspects of culture and language learning through the implementation of the achievements of the nation in order to understand behavioral norms, values and standards.

The enclosure of linguistic and socio-cultural competence in the structure of communicative competence is the key to meet the foreign language course objectives, as it provides a synthesis of communicative and culturally oriented approaches. However, when analyzing this integration, it is important to understand that it applies mainly to practical foreign language courses that focus on teaching effective intercultural communication. This involves careful selection of materials and content aimed at developing practical communication skills.

In the context of culturally oriented component of foreign language practical courses, special attention is paid to the latter interpretation of this concept. The study of cultural and civilizational achievements, for example, of English-speaking nations, is an important element of a practical foreign language course.

The main principles of the cultural approach to the study of foreign languages include:

- integration of cultural context into the studying process, where language acquisition occurs through the cultural background association, contributing to a deeper understanding of the language;
- use of authentic materials, which include literary works, audio and video resources, to ensure realistic and practical language learning;
- comprehensive approach that covers all aspects: speaking, listening, reading and writing, ensuring a masterly command of the language;
- innovation in teaching methods, which includes application of the latest scientific research and innovative technologies in the teaching process;
- the study of traditions, behavioral norms and etiquette of the country using the language under study to ensure the development of intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence in the aspect of foreign language teaching is the ability to understand and respect one's own culture and the culture of the nation whose language is being studied, as well as to efficiently interact with its speakers.

Cultural approach to foreign language teaching affects both the linguistic aspect and the exclusively educational aspect of this process, determining the pragmatic, discursive element, the choice of language material and teaching methods. After all, learning a language without culture is learning "meaningless symbols that are given the wrong sense" [13]. Culture is an important part of language education, foreign culture comprehension affects the achievement of the desired language competence. Understanding nation's culture code, which is
expressed in architecture, art, literature, traditions, customs, human values, etc is crucially important for the efficient educational process.

Adequate foreign language mastery is the main prerequisite for well-organized collaboration of different culture representatives. Teaching a foreign language should be conducted with the emphasis on the study of national identity peculiarities of the language under study. Literature is a significant source of modern language teaching. The expediency of using literary works in foreign language classes is determined by their appropriateness in explaining lexical, grammatical, stylistic phenomena, etc. Students can also expand their knowledge of a certain culture by analyzing the behavior of the characters or the attitude of the author. It should be noted that works of art can be used on various levels of language learning under the condition of adequate selection of appropriate literary materials. Literary texts provide the prospect of engaging students in a discussion of values, behavioral styles, morals, culture codes and other phenomena identified in the literary work.

The use of poetry in foreign language classes is quite effective and interesting both for students and teachers. Poetic works are an excellent source not only of learning the culture of the nation whose language is studied, for example English, but also an excellent material for mastering grammatical and lexical constructions.

It is extremely important to select training manuals that should contain relevant and adequate modern materials for learning communication models that will prevent misunderstandings and culture shock when communicating with native speakers.

Art genres such as music, visual arts and cinema also play an important role in raising cultural awareness. Application of various art work examples will ensure catering for various students' learning styles and capacities. Before introducing a certain song or film into the educational process, it is worth considering which linguistic and cultural aspects can be regarded with the help of this work. In the educational process with students who are better at perceiving visual information, visual arts related tasks, representing cultural component of language learning, prove to be rather productive. Works of art encourage various cultural and social topic discussions.

The advantages of cultural approach lie in the expansion of students' cultural horizon, their familiarization with country's traditions and customs, which contributes to more effective communication, building intercultural relations, including professional ones, integration into a new intercultural community. It also helps to overcome stereotypes and develops open-mindedness, tolerance and civility towards other cultures, encouraging cultural dialogue.

As for communicative behavior standards, students should be taught both verbal and non-verbal, as well as mixed ones. It is essential to take into account the divergence in the degree of formality and informality of diverse cultures. For instance, it is compulsory to adjust the speed of conversation, its tone and the
intonation coloring of the message. It is important to realize that the main goal is to carry out a successful communicative act, and in order to reach this objective one needs to develop the skills to periodically check whether the interlocutors correctly interpret the message, for example, by paraphrasing and summarizing the discourse line. Open questions should also be frequently used, whereas confusing polysemant tokens and collocations should be avoided. Reasonable employment of the abovementioned effective skills, combined with the successful implementation of soft skills, significantly increases the level of intercultural discourse efficacy.

In addition to verbal differential cultural markers, there are also non-verbal elements that play an equally significant, and sometimes even a greater role in intercultural communication. For example, direct eye contact is perceived radically differently by representatives of Asian and Western American cultures. If the former can interpret it even as a manifestation of disrespect and aggression, the latter ones perceive it as a mandatory norm of respect and courtesy.

Another clear example can be the problem of personal space. As Edward Hall noted, culture affects personal space, the degree of personal distance is determined by the cultural background of the interlocutors. Accordingly, high-contact and low-contact cultures are distinguished [14]. Representatives of dissimilar culture types build and perceive physical contact in different ways: a handshake upon greetings, a kiss on the cheek, a bow, etc. For instance, in many cultures smiling when greeting is an integral part of communication, while in other cultures it may be optional. These standards form the generally accepted etiquette of communicative behavior in a certain linguistic socio-cultural community, which includes all aspects of communication: verbal, non-verbal and mixed ones.

Mastering the etiquette of communicative behavior is considered a central element of cultural awareness within practical foreign language courses, especially in programs that do not have a professional specialization. The importance of this aspect even exceeds the magnitude of grammatical, lexical and phonetic language norms. This is due to the fact that native speakers are generally tolerant of non-native speakers' linguistic mistakes, but are often more vulnerable to deviations of communicative behavior etiquette, which they consider immutable. Non-compliance with these norms can be perceived as an insult or disrespect.

In addition, a significant element of cultural approach is also the standard of communicative lifestyle and, accordingly, business behavior. Representatives of dissimilar cultures have contrasting types of behavior in group dynamics. They have an incongruent perception of the business decision making process due to the contrasting, culturally predetermined phenomenon of professional hierarchy, attitudes towards prioritizing tasks, approaches to building business relationships. It should be noted that differences in generations, education, and religion significantly affect the value system of cultural carriers as well. These norms also define
appropriate behavior in a variety of everyday situations including interaction with people and man-made objects. Knowing how to properly conduct financial transactions, negotiate, navigate the public catering system, etc. is an integral part of culture adaptation.

Ignorance of these aspects of culture is not a breach of etiquette, but it can lead to uncomfortable or dangerous situations that can potentially cause culture shock and even conflicts. Awareness and adherence to the rules of intercultural communication can prevent conflicts and misunderstandings. Therefore, in practical courses of a foreign language teaching, it is imperative to pay attention not only to linguistic aspects, but also to cultural ones: customs, traditions, values, morals, etc., realities related to everyday life.

Taking into account the aforementioned, communicative behavior standards are critically important in mastering the language and understanding the culture of the people who speak this language, therefore their enclosure in the practical course is considered quite essential.

In addition, there is another significant aspect of culture-oriented learning, which goes beyond the narrow understanding of the concept of culture and can intersect with the concept of culture in its broad sense. This refers to mass culture, which has deeply penetrated the consciousness and subconsciousness of native speakers. Knowledge of salient elements of mass culture that are understood and known in the mass consciousness is necessary for effective communication. For example, ignorance of generalized cultural symbols such as Mickey Mouse or Elvis Presley can be a barrier in communicating with native English speakers, especially in the context of American culture.

Thus, the study of significant elements of mass culture in a practical course of a foreign language for non-specialized purposes is fairly appropriate and should not create great difficulties, since such elements are not particularly numerous but rather vital for the cultural context understanding of the language.

Cultural approach application in teaching English as a foreign language creates a favorable environment in which knowledge of the language is an inseparable component of nation's cultural heritage awareness. The key aspects of this approach in the process of higher education are:

- immersion into cultural environment: cultural approach promotes students' immersion into the cultural environment of the country, the language of which they are study. This means that students do not just learn the language from textbooks and manuals, but also delve into the real culture and traditions of this country. They have the opportunity to study literature, music, films and television shows, which helps them understand the peculiarities of the mentality and values of this country.

- development of cultural competence: the main goal of cultural approach is the development of students' cultural competence. They learn to understand and respect nations' culture codes, value cultural differences and adapt to cultural customs and norms.
intercultural communication: cultural approach contributes to the development of students' intercultural communication skills. They learn to communicate effectively with speakers representing other cultures, show tolerance and the ability to resolve intercultural conflicts.

Cultural projects: cultural approach can include the development of cultural projects where students explore and present different cultural aspects of the country, using the language under study. This allows students to be actively involved in the study of culture and helps to deepen their understanding of cultural features and contributes to their creative development.

Cultural analysis of the language: when studying language through the prism of cultural studies, students focus on culturally determined language expressions, idioms, cultural symbols and metaphors, which contributes to the enrichment of their language competence and understanding.

Promoting global thinking: cultural approach promotes the development of global thinking, allowing students to better recognize their place in the world and act as global citizens, understanding the significance of cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence.

All the above mentioned aspects help to ensure the effective employment of cultural approach in foreign language teaching, contributing to a profound understanding of language and culture by the students.

Conclusions. Modern world, with its active globalization and intensive international exchange processes, requires a cavernous understanding and mastery of foreign languages as a means of communication and interaction between diverse cultures. Foreign language study, particularly in the context of the English language, becomes not only the key to the development of language competence, but also the opportunity to discover country's cultural context and to better understand its traditions, values, history and way of life.

However, learning a foreign language can face a number of problems and challenges related to the interpretation of cultural aspects of the language. Traditional approaches to teaching may focus mainly on linguistic aspects, leaving aside the cultural context. This can limit understanding of cultural differences that affect speech, behavior and communication in the English-speaking environment. An additional problem is the choice of the appropriate cultural resources and materials that support cultural approach in language teaching.

Assessing students' cultural competence can also be a challenge, as it cannot always be objectively measured by traditional language parameters. Cultural approach is aimed at developing students' cultural awareness and skills, which require special assessment methods.

Regardless all the challenges, obviously prevailing beneficial aspects point at the importance and necessity of cultural approach implementation in foreign language teaching as it affects both the linguistic and the exclusively educational
aspect of the teaching/learning process. This approach helps students not only to learn the language, but also to discover the richness of the culture underlying it and develop cultural competence.

References:


