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LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract: The problem of intercultural communication between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds becomes relevant topic. Despite the strong relationship between language and culture in foreign language learning, cultural learning has not been integrated into learning objectives. Orientation towards intercultural communication correlates with the solution of the problem of developing intercultural competence, aimed at developing the effectiveness of students in communicating in a language through a cultural context.

Keywords: culture, intercultural communication, context, teaching and learning, a foreign language.

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Язык и межкультурная коммуникация в обучении иностраннх языков в Казахстане

Аннотация: Актуальной темой становится проблема межкультурного общения между людьми разного языкового и культурного происхождения. Несмотря на тесную связь между языком и культурой при изучении иностранных языков, изучение культуры не было интегрировано в цели обучения. Ориентация на межкультурную коммуникацию коррелирует с решением проблемы развития межкультурной компетентности, направленной на развитие эффективности общения студентов на языке через культурный контекст.

Ключевые слова: культура, межкультурная коммуникация, контекст, преподавание и обучение, иностранный язык.

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Қазақстанда шет тілдерін оқытудағы тіл және мәдениетаралық коммуникация

Аннотация: Әр түрлі тілдер мен мәдени ортадағы адамдар арасындағы мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас мәселесі өзекті тақырыпқа айналады. Шет тілдерін үйрену кезінде тіл мен мәдениет арасындағы тығыз байланысқа қарамастан, мәдениетті зерттеу оқу мақсаттарына біріктірілмеген. Мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынасқа бағдарлау мәдени контекст арқылы студенттердің тілдегі қарым-қатынасының тиімділігін дамытуға бағытталған мәдениетаралық құзыреттілікті дамыту мәселесін шешумен байланысты.

Түйінді сөздер: Мәдениет, мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас, контекст, оқыту және оқыту, шет тілі.

Kazakhstan is a multinational, multicultural state and its education system is aimed at realizing the citizens' multilingual education today.

Language education as a value involves consideration of three axiological blocks:
- language education as a state value,

- language education as a social value,
- language education as a personal value [1, p. 6].

The role of any language is determined by its status in society and the state. At the present time language policy is the topical issue in Kazakhstan. Under the conditions of the new economic and social-political reality the priorities of the Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan are defined by the aspiration to correspond to the international standards. One of the tasks of the language policy of an Independent Kazakhstan is increasing the role of English language in the sphere of education, as it is the language of successful integration into the global economics.

It is known that a foreign language is objectively a social value, its inclusion in the educational program is a social demand of society. An analysis of the history of human development shows that a foreign language has always been an objective need of society, without which society cannot fully function and develop. A foreign language, like a native language, does not exist in society in isolation. It is closely connected with all spheres of society: economy, politics, defense, art, etc. [2, p. 14-15].

A number of authors believe that the commonality in the field of goal setting of the academic subjects “foreign language” and “mother tongue” is focused on “forming a communication system, mastering linguistic means of communication” [3, p. 38]. Russian linguist Passov E.I. emphasized: “A foreign language, like a native language, performs several different functions: it serves as a means of cognition and the custodian of national culture, it is also a means of communication, expression of attitude to the world and a tool for development and upbringing” [2, p. 15]. That’s why understanding the cultural dimensions of a language is necessary to know how they are applied by those whose native language is different from the one being learned. Culture can be defined as a system of ideas that controls the attitude and behavior of human both individually and in groups as every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of the norms can be completely different and conflict with other cultures’ norms. Consequently, communication problems may arise among speakers who

do not know or share the norms of other culture [4].

It is necessary to consider the term “culture” to understand the subject under discussion. The concept of “culture” is used by many sciences, which indicates the breadth of scientific approaches in the study and understanding of culture, resulting in a variety of concepts and definitions developed during the study of the phenomenon of culture. The term “culture” originated from Latin, goes back to the Latin *cultura*, which means “cultivation”, “processing” and “care”. Correspondingly, culture is the cultivation of land, cultivation of plants and animals. However, this term had another meaning already in Roman antiquity, which means “politeness”, “enlightenment”. Hence, the term culture has one more meaning such as “educator” and “mentor”. The transformation of this term in Roman antiquity testifies to its filling with universal content, the general context of this transformation relates to human science and education [5]. Western culture researcher Edward B. Tylor defined culture in very different definition: “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Here culture refers to the learned attributes of society, something we already have [6].

Scholars and educators researching foreign language teaching claim that teaching a foreign language as a subject in educational institutions helps learners to form and develop intercultural understanding. Language and culture are interrelated. If the learner learns the language and does not take into account cultural factors, it leads to misunderstanding [7, p. 24].

There are a lot of studies devoted to the teaching of intercultural communication, however, there is no agreement on how culture should be defined operationally in the context of foreign language learning. The need for change in teaching foreign language is a consequence of changes in the contemporary world and the language policy aimed at meeting these changes. There is, perhaps, no more important topic in the social sciences than the study of cultural understanding in teaching a foreign language. Understanding

between members of different cultures was always important, but it has never been as important as it is now. The dilemma of the global age is that we are profoundly divided by race, culture, and belief. Any education should aim to develop a person as a subject of culture. People should be taught not only knowledge, but culture, not only to have given education but to be creative.

The aim of all communication by means of language is to exchange messages. These messages may be ritual, offer information, express emotions, establish or maintain relationships, convince, or persuade our interlocutor, or discuss the interaction itself. All these types to be successful between two (or more) communication participants for the interaction, context should be corresponding. Such a context needs to be established first. D. Hymes claims that the key to understanding language in context is to start not with the language but with the context [8]. Not to mention speakers of different languages who meet for the first time, even friendly speakers who share their mother tongue and culture need language to re-establish their relationship. They normally feel the need to negotiate a context before they 'get down to business' of whatever kind. This 'negotiation of context' process is full of problems and requires insight into the nature of culture, a willingness to establish real contact therefore, it needs the linguistic and pragmatic skills. Context helps to understand a certain situation, event, or information, i.e., the content can be fully understood from the context [9]. Hereby, context is a system of internal and external conditions of human life and activity. This system affects the process of perception, understanding, interpretation and transformation by a person of a specific situation of action. For example, different nations or nationalities have different ways of thinking and cultural backgrounds; consequently their ways of understanding objective things differ greatly. It is rare to find out words that are absolutely equal in meaning between two distinct languages. The meaning of one word may vary with the difference of languages. Many words often partake of certain cultural information, the so-called "cultural-loaded words". The English word *dog* and Kazakh word *um [it]* (Latin Turcological

transcription)¹ (in the Kazakh language which means dog) have the same conception, and both show the same animal, but they are different in intension in each language. English love dogs very much, so dog is used as a commendatory term in many cases. Dog indicates "faithful", "friendly", "lovely", etc., in intension. Here are a few examples to illustrate dog in English: "You're really a lucky dog, John"; "A clever dog"; "A top dog"; "Dog does not eat dog". The dogs in these idiomatic phrases are equal to men. Another example, "He works like a dog" means "He works diligently". *Жеті қазына [Žeti qazına]* has a philosophical concept which means Seven Treasures. Kazakh people associate the Seven Treasures with the life of a brave young man. *Жеті қазына [Žeti qazına]* includes a fleet-footed steed, a hunting golden eagle, a faithful dog of the Tazy breed, a good rifle, a hunting trap, a clever, beautiful wife, a sharp knife. So, a dog is considered one of the seven treasures. There are some proverbs connected with dog, e.g.

- *Жақсы ум — малға серік [Žaqsı it mağa serik]* - A good dog is a companion for livestock.
 - *Жақсы ум өлімтігін көрсетпейді [Žaqsı it öliktiğın körsetpeydi]* - A good dog does not let others witness its death.
 - *Um — ырыс [Um — ıris]* - A dog is a treasure.
 - *Um иесіне үрмес [Um iesine ürmes]* - Dogs will not bark at their owners.
- However, in Kazakh language, *um [it]* is used as a derogatory term in many cases. Such as, *umtiñ etinen жек көру, [umtiñ etinen žek körw]* - to hate something like dog's meat,
- *Жетелеген ум аңға жарамас [Žetelegen it aңға жарамас]* - A lead dog is not suitable for hunting.
 - *Үре білмеген ум үйіне ұры келтірер [Üre bilmegen um üiñe urı keltirer]* - A dog, that does not know how to bark, brings a thief to its house.
 - *Um құтырса, иесін қабар [Um qutırsa iesin qabar]* - If a dog is rabid, it will bite its owner.
 - *Um umtiğın істемей қоймайды [Um umtiğın istemeı qoymaydı]* - Dogs always do dogs things.
 - *Um қорыған жерге өш [Um qoriğın žerge öš]* - A dog likes to go to the guarded place.

So, from these proverbs it can be seen differences in the cultural interpretation of the word *dog* in Kazakh and English proverbs. For example, when

used in a metaphorical sense in the Kazakh language, in most cases dog has a bad meaning [10, p. 120.], and in English, the same name of dog means honesty.

And the name *sheep*, which has a special significance in the animal husbandry of the Kazakh people, is used in proverbs and sayings in the sense of "meek, humble", "abundance", for example:

- Қой аузынан шөп алмас [қой аузынан шөп алмас] – It describes a person who is docile and obedient.

- Мал өсірсең қой өсір, өнімі оның көл-көсір [Mal ösirsey qoy ösir, önimі onıñ köl-kösir] - If you engage in animal husbandry, engage in sheep breeding, its products will be abundant, in English proverbs "deficiency" is negative. It is used in the meaning "Every family has a black sheep".

Horse became one of the main features for Kazakhs to testify their national identity, because

horse plays enormous role in Kazakh life, and it is fundamental feature, intangible, fixed element and it is holy for Kazakh. Today the importance of the horse is evident in Kazakhstan's popular culture. As a symbol, it has served to build a Kazakh national identity.

- Жақсы айғыр үйірін бөріге алдырмас, батыр жігіт ауылын ұрыға алдырмас [Žaqsı ayıır üyirin bōriге aldirmas, batır žigıt awıılın urıға aldirmas] – A strong stallion will protect its herd from predators, a brave man will protect his auyl (village) from thieves.

- Жақсы би жақынына тартпайды, жақсы айғыр жатырына шаппайды [Žaqsı bi žaқınıна tartpaydı, žaqsı ayıır žatırına šappaydı] – A good bii (judge) makes the honest judgement, a good stallion doesn't mate with its own kind. For example, there are a lot of forms of address of horse (жылқы, жілік) in Kazakh language [11, p. 305].

Table 1 - Horse names by its ages

No	Horse names	Latin Turcological transcription	Description
1	құлын	құлın	a newborn horse (foal)
2	жабағы	žabayı	a six-month-old horse
3	тай	tay	a year-old horse
4	құнан	қunan	a two-year-old male horse
5	байтал	baytal	a two-year-old female horse
6	дөнен	dönen	a three-year-old male horse
7	бесті ат	besti at	a five-year-old horse
8	сақа ат (айғыр)	saqa at	a male horse (stallion)
9	кәрі ат	käri at	an old horse (older than 12 years old)
10	қасабалы бие	qasabalı bie	a seven or eight-year old female horse
11	кәртәмыс бие	kärtämis bie	an old female horse (11-14 years old)
12	жасаған бие	žasayan bie	a twenty-year-old female horse
13	сәурік	säwrik	a three-four-year-old male horse

So, *horse* in the concept of Kazakh language is associated with *clever, holy, companion, swift, clean, noble*.

Some words in Kazakh language are understandable only to Kazakhs, such words need to be explained comprehensively, i.e. teachers should interpret the meaning of words. For example, the word in Kazakh language like *шаңырақ* *šañıraq*, its direct meaning is *the round top of yurt*, but it has other meanings as *šañıraq köterw – get married, қара шаңырақ – big, noble, sacred home, which is a large house of ancestors, inherited by the youngest child*. Another word is *ақын*

aқın, its first meaning is *poet*, another meaning is *the folk poet* among the Kazakh people who sings and plays impromptu and extempore verse with the instrument like *dombra*. *Ақындар айтысы* *Aқıндar aytısi* is the kind of *folk poet competition* between *aқıндar*, which is still popular in Kazakhstan. The word *көгендей* *kөгendew* is a kind of way *to fasten* a flock of lambs with the rope in order to prevent their escape, etc., there are no equal words in English that show the same conception as in Kazakh language.

This means that the internal context is the individual psychological characteristics,

knowledge, experience of a person, and the external context is the information, socio-cultural, spatial, and temporal characteristics of the situation in which a person acts. Through context, a person knows what to expect and can make sense of the situation. Before acting, a person seeks to collect all contextual information. The context of the communicative situation not only provides information about the conditions under which the utterance is perceived, but also generates expectations regarding the likely goals of the participants and speech acts that can be performed in this situation, while the communicative situation contains extra-situational moments as background, language, cultural knowledge [12].

The best introduction to intercultural (foreign) language teaching starts with a discussion of what culture is and on which points cultures are generally differ. They will explicitly invite their learners to open to other ways of thinking and other types of logic than just their own. Learners will learn to see their own view of the world as just one among many. They will enter conversations or written contacts with an awareness of their role in the interactional setting. They will know the complexities in the establishment of context, the creation of topics, and the participation in various types of interaction.

Therefore, the teaching of the target culture must serve the development of cross-cultural communication. The achievement of this goal is possible with the preparation of an organized inventory that would include both linguistic and extra linguistic aspects of the target culture. This way the language could build bridges from one cognitive system to another [13]. The culture of people refers to all aspects of shared life in a community. If language is described as a mode of human behaviour and culture as “patterned behaviour”, it is evident that language is a vital constituent of culture. As mentioned earlier, each culture has a unique pattern and the behaviour of an individual, linguistic, or otherwise, manifested through that is also unique. Foreign language will mean, therefore, changing the learner’s behaviour and injecting a new way of life and new values of life into his already settled behaviour pattern. So, there is a close relationship between the language and culture. This relationship of language and

culture is widely recognized, communicative behaviour and cultural systems are interrelated, as there is relation between the form and content of a language and the beliefs, values, and needs present in the culture of its speakers. Teacher’s task is to make students aware of cultural differences, not pass value judgments on the differences.

The reasons for introducing learners to the cultural components should be to:

- develop the communicative skills,
- understand the linguistic and behavioral patterns both target and native culture at a more conscious level,
- develop intercultural and international understanding,
- adopt a wider perspective in the perception of the reality,
- make teaching sessions more enjoyable to develop an awareness of the potential mistakes that might come up in comprehension, interpretation, and translation and communication.

One of the most important reasons for learning a foreign language is the ability to communicate with people who do not speak the same native language. Yet just words are not enough in this communication process. The context of culture, in which the words will acquire their value and meaning, is equally important. Culture can be generally defined as a system of ideas that control the attitude and behavior of human both individually and in groups. This concept of culture encompasses language among others cultural components. Understanding the cultural dimensions of a language is necessary to know how they are applied by those whose native language is different from the one being learned. The implication is that culture must be integrated into foreign language teaching and learning for its meaningful use to take place. In learning a foreign language, the meaning of words determines the communication process. Therefore, social interaction is crucial in learning a foreign language for communication purposes rather than seeing it merely as linguistic conversation. Despite the interconnectedness between language and culture in foreign language learning, culture learning has not been integrated in curricular goals. The lack of culture learning might materialize when a learner uses the acquired foreign language and realizes that his

skills, grammar, or vocabulary are not enough to represent the implications of meanings. The meanings of a word are the segment of personal or societal life to which they refer. The variation in meanings is likely to lead to incorrect language use that cannot be solved by the learner's mastery of linguistic components. This moves the problem out of linguistics and into culture. It implies that teaching and learning process of a foreign language remains inaccurate and incomplete unless it is complemented by appropriate knowledge of the culture of the target language.

In conclusion foreign language education is very influential in the development of individual person. A language is a nation's spiritual foundation, and its culture is the fund of cumulative history and values. We believe that the focus in teaching any foreign language should be on the

culture of different countries and nations. Thus, the content of instruction might use the customs, traditions, history, and literature of the target country. In other words, language should be taught by using culturally relevant material. Not only will students become more acquainted with their own country's past and present values, but also, they will be more motivated to learn. Also, when students compare their own culture with that of the foreign language's culture, they become aware of and proud of their own country's heritage, history, achievements, and values.

¹The transcription system used in the paper is a Turcological convention which is proposed by Johanson & Csató (2022), Johanson (2021: 6–10) and adopted by Abish (2016) and Jumabay (2022).

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