

Building linguocultural competence through online-newspapers

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Формирование лингвокультурной компетенции средствами онлайн-газет

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Abstract: *in the article we look at online periodicals as a source of cultural information and analyse the ways in which they can be used to develop the students' linguocultural competence. The examples of exercises, that can be used to build the linguocultural competence, are given according to the levels of the students' competence.*

Аннотация: *в статье рассматриваются тексты онлайн-газет в качестве источника культурологической информации и анализируются пути их использования в процессе формирования лингвокультурной компетенции обучающихся. Автор предлагает примеры упражнений для развития лингвокультурной компетенции с учетом ее уровня, сформированного у обучающихся.*

Keywords: *levels of linguocultural competence, online newspapers, EFL-studies.*

Ключевые слова: *уровни лингвокультурной компетенции, онлайн-газеты, обучение английскому языку как иностранному.*

Teaching the students to understand different cultures is crucially important in the twenty-first century of globalization and growing intercultural contacts. In search of a good source of cultural information that gives an opportunity to create authentic assignments, EFL teachers may turn to newspaper texts. Online versions of high-quality periodicals, such as 'The Guardian', 'The Independent', 'The Telegraph', 'The Times' provide the latest overview of the world and local news, cover different writing styles and are allowed to be used in the language classroom.

As well as printed newspapers, online periodicals provide a lot of articles of cultural value. And it is worth commenting on what is seen as culture. The modern 3-P perception of culture suggested by B. Bilash states the 'three P's of culture' being: products, practices, and perspectives. According to Bilash, 'products' of culture include pieces of literature or works of art; 'practices' are traditions related to holiday celebrations or rules of behaviour; 'perspectives' are the underlying values and beliefs of a people [1].

Articles, reflecting culture in its 3-P perspective can be found in online versions of English and American newspapers. Products of culture can be traced in such sections of newspapers as 'music', 'film' 'television', 'radio', 'art', 'books'. Practices are reflected in such newspaper parts as 'sports', 'travel', 'food', 'health' and 'lifestyle', the latter covering wide range of feature articles from 'Thanksgiving: the latest US tradition to take root in UK, as one in six celebrate 'Brits-giving' (a headline from 'The Independent' newspaper) to 'How to talk to anyone: the experts' guide' (a headline from 'The Guardian'). Perspectives or values, 'for instance, youth valued over age or valuing sports over education' (Bilash, 2011) can be traced when reading the 'opinion' or 'comment' sections and cartoons that in an ironic way reflect problems and attitudes that exist in society.

Taking online newspapers articles containing cultural information both for work in class and setting home tasks, corresponds with the objectives set in 'Unesco Declaration on cultural diversity', that are 'Promoting through education an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and improving to this end both curriculum design and teacher education' and 'Encouraging 'digital literacy' and ensuring greater mastery of the new information and communication technologies, which should be seen both as educational discipline and as pedagogical tools capable of enhancing the effectiveness of educational services' [2].

When choosing articles online, the teachers should keep in mind the educational goal they want to achieve by using newspaper texts in EFL classroom. When the aim is not only to teach the language, but also to make students familiar with the culture of the country where it functions, we can speak of developing linguocultural competence. We understand it as an ability to trace and interpret cultural concepts, expressed through the language, that reflect the social consciousness of the native speakers. The linguists that study this competence (as V. Vorobiev, V. Maslova), state that the competence includes the system of knowledge about culture, as well as personal traits, acquired while studying this system.

Taking into consideration the definition of linguocultural competence and the elements comprising it, we suggest the following levels of its development that can be viewed as learning outcomes and according to which tasks should be designed.

Level	Component	Descriptors
Recognition	Practical	A student finds in the texts cultural symbols, names. Accumulates cultural information expressed clearly in a text.
	Motivational	Is interested in cultures that are different. Thinks it's possible to understand other cultures and social situations.
Understanding	Practical	Generalises cultural phenomena and facts. Identifies the hidden meaning of cultural material (e.g. in idioms) Selects and evaluates cultural standards, norms.
	Motivational	Tries to learn the reasons behind the social customs and behaviours of different people. Respectfully interprets other social and cultural values.
Approval	Practical	Analyses and compares ideological and moral guidelines presented in the text. Adopts statements to specific situations keeping in mind cultural differences. Stimulates situations of intercultural dialogue, considering linguocultural peculiarities of the target culture.
	Motivational	Is interested in how to reconcile different social customs and practices. Understands own society and culture in human social context. Promotes integration and transculturality as a way of coping with diversity.

To help the students reach the first level of Recognition, a teacher may apply the following activities when working with articles or extracts from them:

- Finding words that represent a different cultural reality (i.e. names of foods, sports, etc.);
- Writing out the names of famous people together with a one-line biography, (e.g. 'Beyonce, an R'nB singer and film star');
- Choosing a headline for a story (a teacher should write extra headlines to an article so that one of them contained a linguocultural concept, e.g. idiom).

To develop the linguocultural competence to the level of Understanding, you may use the following types of work:

- Retelling a story by using explanations instead of underlined cultural concepts, (e.g. 'game played with a ball and bat' instead of 'cricket');
- Enriching a story with idioms on the topic of discussion;
- Ranking linguocultural material (e.i. idioms, pans) according to the level of their ambiguity.

To achieve the Approval level the following activities can be used:

- Rewriting articles so that to make positive ones out of negative, politically neutral from critical, etc.;
- Comparing articles on the same topic (e.g. 'recent international news'), published in newspapers by different communities, countries;
- Making students' own newspaper to compare a particular aspect of culture in different cultures (e.g. 'Christmas around the world').

Summing everything up, we can state that online newspapers serve as a valuable source of cultural information and can be referred to when exposing cultures at EFL lesson. The levels of developing the linguocultural competence, that we give in the article, as well as the examples of exercises, graded in reference to competence levels, can be used by EFL teachers when preparing tasks that aim at building the students' cultural awareness, tolerance and interest towards other cultures and languages.

References

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