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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TERMS OF SOCIALLY JUSTIFIED COMMUNICATION

Abstract: The paper discusses the process of developing language skills and competences in terms of socially justified situations. The individuals interact and exchange information 24/7. The foreign language teaching focuses on mastering learners' language skills by concentrating efforts on developing communicative competence.

The best way to develop language skills is to enhance knowledge in listening, reading, speaking and writing. One of the goals of learning a foreign language is to learn precisely the meanings, values and practices behind it.

Key words: language competences, communication, foreign language teaching, vocabulary.

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Introduction

In modern specialized literature, it is assumed that the main idea of foreign language teaching is that the individual can use the language to communicate. Nowadays, foreign language teaching enables learners to master the language by concentrating their efforts on developing *communicative competence*. Such training focuses on the process of communication - using language appropriately in different types of social situations. It is the communicative nature of language that learners deal with, and namely solving problems or obtaining information. The emphasis is on using language to communicate with other people. The idea is that people learn language when they use it, but people also use language in many different ways, where they actually apply competencies acquired. The communicative competence itself can be expressed by the components in any language - *phonology* (dealing with the sound system of a language), *structure* (dealing with the rules for making meaningful judgments or the so-called grammar) and *vocabulary* (dealing with the use of words). But in order to use a language properly one needs other skills such as *listening* and *reading* (passive, receptive skills), *speaking* and *writing* (active, productive skills). Thinking in foreign

language can also be classified as language skill and competence. The best way to develop language skills is to enhance knowledge in listening, reading, speaking and writing describing the four competences: *discursive*, *grammatical*, *socio-linguistic*, *strategic*.

Veselin Chantov makes the following analysis: the *discursive competence* refers to the learner's ability to use language in written or oral expression. It is important how well one can combine the grammatical forms and meaning to find different forms of oral or written expression. This competence is often referred to as "fluency" in oral and written expression (*fluency*).

The *grammatical competence* refers to the ability to use language correctly, i.e. how well the learner has mastered the grammatical rules of a language. This includes vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, grammatical accuracy of written or spoken expressions (*accuracy*).

The *socio-linguistic competence* refers to the learner's ability to use language correctly in a specific social situation and depends on factors such as social status, goals of communication and the expectations of the participants in the communication. The question is how socially justified is the use of the foreign

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language in different situations, i.e. how relevant is the choice of one or another form of language in the particular social context of communication (*appropriacy*).

The strategic competence considers the effective implementation of communication when the learner's vocabulary is insufficient in dealing with a concrete social situation in which one finds herself/himself. This competence reveals how well a person uses verbal and non-verbal forms of communication to compensate the lack of knowledge or skills, i.e. is the learner able to find appropriate ways to communicate when there are weaknesses in foreign language skills, i.e. what is one's communicative efficiency (*communicative efficacy*).

In order to carry out successfully the tasks and activities related to the communicative situations in which the learners find themselves, it is necessary to enhance their participation in communicative events to develop additional competences, which are thoroughly examined by the European Framework of Reference for Languages, and namely: learning, teaching, assessment.

All competences contribute in their own way to one's ability to communicate and can be considered as aspects of communicative competence. The language framework distinguishes those closely related to language from those that represent a form of functional competence of the individual. And this component is of a particular importance for the professional usage of a foreign language, since *functional competence* is associated with oral expression and written presentation for specific functional purposes. Competence in communication is not only knowledge of which specific communication functions are performed with specific language forms. Participants are engaged in communication, where each initiative leads to a reaction and moves the communication process forward, towards a sequence of stages and exchanges of ideas (Chantov 2012: 6).

Functional competence is expressed in the construction of a communication structure. More complex situations have a more complicated structure of communication, expressed in the use of certain communicative schemes for the implementation of communication, the so-called social interaction patterns. In more complex and multilayered interactions, for example, where it is necessary to apply interdisciplinary skills, language is used to: form a working group and establish connections between participants; establishing shared knowledge about the relevant features of the situation; determining the need and possibility of making a change; establishing agreement on the objectives and the actions to be taken to achieve them; understanding regarding the roles of the team members in the execution of the tasks; management of activities related to: identifying and dealing with problems during work, coordination and consistency of actions,

joint promotion, reporting on the achievement of sub-goals; reporting on the ultimate achievement of the task objective; performance evaluation; final and summarizing stage.

By improving the competences, which are a set of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow the performance of various activities, students develop communicative competence that allows them to act using linguistic and non-linguistic means in order to achieve a given result in the context of solving a problem of the professional or another sphere of life, fulfilling some duty or achieving a personal or socially significant goal. The basic competencies of future pedagogical specialists are successfully developed if:

- pedagogical conditions have been created in foreign language classes;
- methods, approaches and ways of teaching aimed at activities applied;
- extracurricular work in a foreign language is organized, effectively influencing the formation of basic competencies.

It is of great importance to determine the levels and criteria for the manifestation of basic competencies among students, to reveal the possibilities of the Practical English language discipline to activate the development of the basic competencies of future specialists.

In foreign language didactics, there are different ideas about the contents, topics, methods and goals of intercultural learning. Two main concepts stand out:

1. Cross-cultural learning provides knowledge, for example, about English-speaking countries. It is information about geography, politics, history, economy, society and culture. This learning process runs parallel to the language work. The learning process aims at learning dates and facts and through this - the formation of lasting knowledge.

2. Intercultural learning supports the language acquisition process. The position advocated is that learning a language also requires knowledge of culture and society. Even when learning foreign words, for example, it is established that the meanings of words are not always identical in one's own and foreign languages. Sensitivity to cultural differences is awakened by the learner. Intercultural learning is therefore integrated as an integral part of foreign language learning. The goal of intercultural learning is not only to accumulate knowledge from facts, but also to awaken curiosity and develop skills for communicating with a foreign culture. Not only linguistic didactic views are shared, but also educational-political ones, in order to unite linguistic and intercultural learning. Foreign language learning contributes to freedom from prejudice and supports successful intercultural communication.

The study of the foreign language very often takes place outside the real language situations and far from the country and the people of the foreign language being studied. It is beyond any doubt that the

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use of authentic materials has a strong impact. Literary texts could serve as such - from the work with English fairy tales at an early age of encountering the foreign language, to the rich literary sources of the masters of the word. But how to practically implement this cross-cultural learning in foreign language learning? Unfortunately, both before and in recent times, no comprehensive and systematized concept of how to build intercultural competence of students has been created. Most scholars dealing with foreign language didactics agree that traditional forms of foreign language learning should be supplemented by "experimental learning" (Legutke 2008: 103).

It is also noted there that "consistently in the center of didactic considerations, contents and forms of learning and teaching are being pushed to activate the learner here and now during the foreign language lesson...". Back in 1990, Wolfgang Butzkamm came to the conclusion, around which most specialists are united, "that foreign languages should be learned and taught with the reasonable help of the mother tongue and the careful emphasis on grammar, but above all on communication, rather than and only on previously prepared exercises", as well as "on the many unsolved problems in the application of these relatively abstract principles in the concrete practice of teaching..." (Butzkam 1990: 74).

Foreign languages are often practiced in "non-authentic situations". A significant part of the students never get the opportunity to communicate in the foreign language outside the classroom, but nevertheless they know the goals of the language exercises and role-playing games. Fictive action situations are inevitable for the development of communicative competence. However, if we remain only with such and simulating communication situations, then the foreign language will never become a real "medium of understanding". Foreign language learning needs a "real world break-in" if it aims to create lasting interest in learners. What would prevent foreign language learners from being allowed to act in real communicative situations? It is necessary for them to have the information about the foreign culture and society, but also to be able to interpret it themselves. This requires prior formation of ability and readiness for "implementation" in the life of the other. Such a new perspective and the corresponding approach facilitate the acquisition of multifaceted knowledge about one's own and foreign culture. The method of changing the perspective is often used as an artistic means to obtain the so-called "effect of alienation", i.e. promoting a successful sense of uncertainty in relation to traditional cultural phenomena, asking questions to oneself about the already established views of society.

On the other hand, the trainees must also be able to provide differentiated information about their own way of life and microworld. The connection of these two ways of consideration is an integral part of

intercultural training. New ambitious programs for foreign language training are being developed, which require the training of a new type of teaching staff who, on the one hand, can speak languages at a high level, and on the other hand, are very well prepared methodically. Programs for additional qualification and improvement of students of pedagogical specialties in foreign languages, financed through various European programs, are being developed and are already being implemented. According to Sotirov, several European projects are aimed at opportunities to ensure transparency of formal and informal learning, with the goal being to reach a broad consensus regarding the acquisition of value dimensions and the awarding of credits for individual competencies and knowledge (Sotirov 2017: 624). The programs in question envisage that the student training activities will be carried out both on the territory of Bulgaria and on the territory of other European countries.

Advanced training programs include:

- teaching according to new methods of foreign language learning, including the application of modern computer technologies;
- conducting intensive specialized training in individual languages;
- organization of specialized courses aimed at improving the qualifications and training of students;
- training in the context of new educational strategies and technologies; in the principles and methods of developing the educational content, plans and programs related to the credit accumulation system; courses on improving the methodology of academic teaching and research activity.

However, when people communicate in a language that is foreign to at least one of the communicators, there is no guarantee that the meanings and values with which the language of communication is embodied at the moment will be the same for all participants during the time of communication. One of the goals of learning a foreign language is to learn precisely the meanings, values and practices behind it. It is for this purpose necessary for the individual to put himself/herself in the place of the "other" or the so-called "decentralization" (from English decenter), to shift the focus from oneself and one's culture to one's interlocutor and the culture of which one is a carrier.

It is a peculiar process in which certain skills characteristic of intercultural competence are developed. Byrum divides these skills into five areas:

- *Savoir (knowledge)*: knowledge about oneself and others, knowledge about the way in which a communicative act takes place, knowledge about the relationship between the individual and society
- *Savoir-faire/savoir comprendre (skills)*: skills to interpret and relate information

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• *Savoir-s'engager (awareness)*: clarity about the political implications of education as well as acceptance of different cultural behaviours

• *Savoir-faire/savoir apprendre (skills)*: skills to seek information about the relevant culture

• *Savoir-etre (attitudes-traits)*: attitude or readiness to adapt in the given environment and ability to appreciate the attitudes and understandings of others.

In conclusion, three main components are present in the directions mentioned above: attitudes,

knowledge and skills, which also are considered as main factors in intercultural communication. M. Byrum connects the attitudes with "curiosity and openness, trust towards the other culture; search for other perspectives to interpret known and unknown phenomena from one or another culture and cultural practices; willingness to experiment with the process of adaptation during interaction with other cultures; readiness for agreements in verbal and non-verbal communication (Byrum 1997: 34–38).

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