

**THE ROLE OF LSP IN CROSS-CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION**

ABSTRACT

The emphasis on linguistic and socioinguistic competence has proved to be insufficient for the solution of problems of misunderstanding in intercultural communication. Real linguistic competence can't be achieved without intercultural competence as well as communicative competence. It can be acquired by introducing into the consciousness adequate integral notions about the foreign language and ethnical culture and creating necessary conditions for the development of bilingual or multilingual consciousness, the formation of which is one of the tasks in FLSP teaching.

Nowadays, the constant growth of international contacts puts in the forefront the task of teaching students intercultural competence and training them for real intercultural communication. If in the past the main interest of scientists studying the problems of communication was mainly concentrated on purely linguistic problems, in recent decades their interest has been shifted to the problem of how the language is connected with the world of a person and to what extent a man and his consciousness depend on the language he uses. Being oriented on the cultural factor in the language and the linguistic factor in a man, this new linguosociocultural approach highlights the integrity of three factors - of a person, language and culture. This problem became very important in Methods of teaching foreign languages, as it was acknowledged that only providing linguistic information was not enough for successful intercultural communication. Scientist' working in the sphere of humanities, including linguists, psychologists and lan-

guage teachers, have begun to think about how they can extend their understanding of communication beyond the emphasis on linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.

Communication, as it is understood by the psychologists, is first of all a means of correction of the interlocutor's image of the world. Conflicts and misunderstanding in intercultural communication are mainly due to the disparities of the consciousness of its participants. Mastering a foreign language implies a transition to the new image of the world necessary for mutual understanding and cooperation between the bearers of different cultures.

Modern linguists and psycholinguists claim that in the case of the language changing by a person there is a change of the forms of language consciousness. A bilingual or multilingual person should be aware of the foreign language world picture, which is the reflection of the conceptual world picture in language, and language means of expressing the knowledge about it.

For the effective intercultural discourse linguistic and professional competence is not enough, it is necessary to have intercultural competence, i.e. the knowledge of cognitive schemes and communicative styles of other cultural communities, ability to perceive and interpret information from the point of view of the native and foreign culture.

Teaching LSP can be considered as one of the means of formation of socio-cultural competence and transition to the new professional image of the world. Since in each independent sphere of social consciousness there are their own methods of perception of the world, the results of such perception are quite different invariants of the image of the world - ethnic, religious, mythological, etc. One of such invariants is the concept of the professional image of the world, the formation of which is one of the tasks of teaching LSP.

By professional competence we understand the whole aggregate of knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to the corresponding professional sphere. J.Harmer argues that different genres of writing and speaking provoke different language use. For example, scientific articles employ passives more than general ones; academic essays re-

quire a style of discourse and particular expressions which would be out of place in normal social interaction. The language of air traffic control has a specific vocabulary which has to be understood and followed if the system is to work. In the area of Business English there is a specific vocabulary and language events (presenting to colleagues, the language of contracts, etc.), which are unlikely to appear in a general English course, but which are vitally important for business students. The same can be said about such procedures as the art of negotiating, the correct use of phones and e-mails, or reading of business reports, etc. All they require a specific kind of language which will allow its users to operate in the world of English-medium commerce (Harmer, 2004: 10).

One of the reasons that people can operate within sociocultural rules is because they know about different styles, and recognize different written and spoken genres. The language use is determined by a number of factors. First among these is the purpose of the communication, what people want to achieve. But the form in which they try to achieve that purpose is determined by other parameters such as the setting, the channel they are using to communicate by, and the type of communication (genre) which they are involved with. A genre approach is especially appropriate for students of English for Specific Purposes, but it is also highly useful for general English students. Ensuring students' confidence with more than one genre becomes vitally important in the teaching of all four traditional skills (Harmer, 2004).

As Richards and Rodgers argue, the functional view of language, on which LSP teaching is based, supports the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning. The communicative approach in language teaching subscribes to this view of language. This theory emphasizes the semantic and communicative dimension rather than merely the grammatical characteristics of language, and leads to a specification and organization of language teaching content by categories of meaning and function rather than by elements of structure and grammar. A notional syllabus includes not only elements

of grammar and lexis but also specifies the topics, notions, and concepts the learner needs to communicate about. Beginning not from a structural theory of language but from a functional account of learner needs, LSP organizes language teaching according to the learners' communicative needs.

Content-Based Instruction, which characterizes LSP courses, draws on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, as these emerged in the 1980s. If, as it was argued, classrooms should focus on real communication and the exchange of information, an ideal situation for second language learning would be one where the subject matter of language teaching was not grammar or functions or some other language-based unit of organization, but content, that is, subject matter from outside the domain of language. LSP is one of the educational initiatives since the last 1970s that emphasize the principle of acquiring content through language rather than the study of language for its own sake (Richards and Rodgers, 2004: 204-205).

Professionally orientated education is supposed to approach the level characteristic for the educated native speaker. It not only presupposes high level of reading, writing and speaking. An important role in training future specialists should be also devoted to their orientation to the national peculiarities, history, culture, customs and traditions of the country the language of which they study. Linguosociocultural competence, i.e. the ability to consider the language in the light of the culture, is an important component of the professional training of specialists. Linguosociocultural method, which is supposed to take into account such a component as social and cultural environment, is one of the most serious and integral methods in teaching foreign languages at the present stage of development of linguodidactics. It treats the language as a mirror in which geography, people's history, mode and conditions of life, traditions, manners, routine behavior and details of daily living are reflected.

The main purpose of linguosociocultural method is the formation of the ability to interpret correctly not only the explicitly expressed meaning, but also the implicit meaning of the interlocutor's utterance, the

formation of the perception of the foreign culture on the intuitive level, as well as the development of certain skills and strategies of behavior when contacting with other cultures.

When people with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds get together they speak to each other easily because they know the rules of conversation in their language and their shared culture. When they write to each other they obey certain conventions. Such rules and conventions are not written down anywhere, nor are they easy to define. But at some cultural level our shared schemata help us to communicate with each other successfully.

Speakers from similar cultural background know how to speak to each other in terms of how formal to be, what kind of language they can use, how loud to speak, or how close to stand to each other. Such sociocultural rules - or shared cultural habits - determine how women and men speak to each other in different societies, how conversations are framed when the participants are of different social and professional status, and guide our behaviour in a number well recognized speech events such as invitation conversations, socializing moves, and typical negotiations.

Sociocultural rules and habits change over time, but at any given moment they exist in the public consciousness so that obeying them or purposefully flouting them become acts of belonging or rejection (Harmer, 2004: 246-247).

The effectiveness of communication depends on a number of factors, among which shared background knowledge is of great importance. Without appropriate background knowledge, people cannot adequately understand written or spoken language. Taking into account the psychological structures of background knowledge and the peculiarities of their functioning will help to increase the effectiveness of foreign language teaching and communication in general.

Background knowledge is accumulated and stored in memory in the form of a schema which is mental representation of typical situations, phenomena or objects that we come across. This prior knowledge of the world is important to understand practically any piece of discourse.

In order to develop in the minds of foreign language learners the schemata and patterns of associations common to those of the native speakers, the formers need to work on variety of different text types representing different spheres of knowledge, different topics, genres, styles, conventions, etc. and revealing schematic knowledge of the native speakers. From this point of view a genre and functional approach, which is peculiar to ESP courses, help students develop their receptive skills and acquire shared schematic knowledge necessary for intercultural understanding.

Nowadays it is generally recognized that a knowledge of the socio-cultural life of this or that country is necessary to improve the understanding and use of the language as it is spoken by the native speakers. Students very often come across such a phenomenon when they are unable to understand fully a phrase in a foreign text and find out that the dictionary doesn't help either; or they understand every word that is said or written by a native speaker, but don't understand what he or she meant. In any society the participants of the discourse leave some things unsaid or unexplained because they assume that their readers and listeners are equipped with the basic knowledge which comes from sharing the same cultural background. One may have reached a high level of proficiency, say, in English, but find English people hard to understand because he or she lacks this background knowledge, the information that forms part of an English person's general knowledge. It is necessary to fill in these gaps in background knowledge, which includes not only facts, figures and experiences shared by the natives of England, but also attitudes of English people to certain aspects of life in general (O'Driscoll.2004).

The knowledge of cultural component is necessary in different spheres of professional knowledge. For example, the translation of juridical terms requires not only deep knowledge of terminology and law, but very often also of historical background of particular legal system.

Though juridical terms, as all the terms, are monosemantic and they are deprived of connotations and are independent from the context, they can have different meanings in different states or even some of

them cannot have their equivalents in the target language. This is the most difficult aspect in translation of not only juridical documents but also any other scientific text.

Development of cultural and professional perception on the intuitive level is also very important. Though everybody recognizes the fact that vocabulary should be learned in context, many teachers knowing the importance of pre-reading activities before assigning a passage to the class often scan it and introduce some of the words which may be unfamiliar to the students.

But this approach may not be the most effective way to teach vocabulary. It sends students the message that meaning resides in words, and that they should worry about the meaning of every word whether they want to understand the text. It is necessary to convey to the students the idea that meaning is constructed by the readers after reading a sentence, a passage or even the whole text, and we can skip over words which are unfamiliar. This does not mean that one or two key words to a passage should not be taught prior to reading a text. Teachers can introduce vocabulary in different ways. One of them is a task of guessing the meaning of a new word from the context. The familiar context will activate a learner's old information or schema and the new meaning will then be assimilated. By relating the new word to an existing schema, the learner is more likely to retain the meaning of the new word.

LSP teaching helps to develop the skills of cultural and professional perception on the intuitive level. As Richards and Rodgers argue, one of the of assumptions about the nature of language that underline Content-Based Instruction is that language is text-and discourse-based. CBI addresses the role of language as a vehicle for learning content. This implies the centrality of linguistic entries longer than single sentences, because the focus of teaching is how meaning and information are communicated and constructed through the discourse. The linguistic units that are central are not limited to the level of sentences and substantial units (clauses and phrases) but are those that account for how longer stretches of language are used and the linguistic features that create coherence

and cohesion within speech events and text types. This involves study of the textual and discourse structure of written texts such as letters, reports, essays, descriptions, or book chapters, or of speech events such as meetings, lectures, and discussions (Richards and Rodgers, 2004: 208).

As Content-Based Instruction is constructed on the basis of learners' communicative needs, one of the goals of CBI include developing positive attitudes towards those who speak the foreign language and toward their culture, to broaden students' understanding of English-speaking peoples (Richards and Rodgers, 2004: 206, 211). One of the goals of teaching cultural competence is to develop sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication. By cultural competence we understand the awareness of one's own culturally-induced behaviour, awareness of the culturally-induced behaviour of others, ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint.

Cultural instructions should help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviour, that social variables such as age, sex and social class influence the ways in which people speak and behave. It should help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture, to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture, to help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language, to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

In order to serve as a medium of communication, language should be based on a common or similar understanding of reality, a more or less adequate idea of the image of the world of native speakers. This goal can't be achieved without special efforts aimed at forming a foreign language consciousness, the formation of which is one of the main tasks of LSP teaching. Without paying attention to the socio-cultural context it won't be possible to overcome the language barrier, eliminate cultural stereotypes and develop intercultural competence necessary for real intercultural communication.

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