

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

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CROSS-CULTURAL CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS WITHIN GLOBAL CHANGES

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в контексте глобальных изменений]**

The present paper deals with some cross-cultural challenges which EFL teachers face due to current global changes. It is based on the ideas of D. Crystal, S.G. Ter-Minasova, M. Kaul and others. The aim of this article consists of revealing the importance and urgent necessity to rethink the role of EFL teachers and specific cultural information in the process of global changes. The author also discusses the role of culture and explains the importance of teaching it. In conclusion, the complex nature of the challenge phenomenon is characterized.

Key words: cross-cultural challenge, EFL teacher, globalization.

It is commonly recognized that the process of globalization is irreversible. In order to acquire global citizenship it is necessary to find ways of bringing the gaps between different cultures. Globalization inevitably causes drastic diversity and may result in communication conflicts. Of course there is the impact of contemporary cultural changes, of society, of global human development on the evolution of EFL and its vocabulary. We witness the process of cross cultural mixing with English. D. Crystal in his book “*World Standard Spoken English*” states that English has become the only truly global language, all in all there are 11,000 mln speakers in the world, that is ¼ of the population is English speaking, 1/3 is native speakers [1]. The rapid spread of English all over the world raises the problem what will become of the English language. Some suggest few possible developments formation of World Standard English unifying all variants of English, preference of one variant (e.g. AMERICAN English), establishment of various “national” Englishes in different regions of the world, and also the convergence of the two Englishes.

It is true, learners and users of English face the world of many varieties. The vast spread of English increases the awareness of the multiple and varied standard and no-standard models. Thus we can state that the present position of English is its global and divergent form. The rise of new world Englishes has become a linguistic phenomenon. According to D. Crystal we face unprecedented rapidity of language change which was introduced by new technology and thus we must rethink traditional priorities, we must work towards culturally grounded linguistics.

The expansion of English in science, medicine, business, politics, global research possibilities, global English in e-book revolution, in technologically delivered distance

education, artificial intelligence and brain chips is indisputable. Here I fully agree with the viewpoint according to which there is need for understanding language learning styles, strategies, the need to develop English learners' intelligence for the goal of better communication across cultures. But we must not forget the pragmatic aspect which is somewhere in between semantic and cultural, that the globalization process made Russia for example, a part of the international community. The graduates, consequently, become a part of the international workforce. To make them competitive on the job market teachers are to provide them with all the necessary skills. Competition, in its turn, implies general communicative competence which is no longer doubted today as well. In this respect, it is necessary today to develop cultural awareness of the target language. Thus, socio-cultural / aspect / context appears to be the integral part of language learning.

The strategic knowledge about the target culture helps learners and users grasp cultures, survive better with fewer breakdowns in cross-cultural communication.

Now I would like to have a small deviation and consider the conception of culture. There are valid meanings of the word "culture". It may be an intellectually and socially 'cultured' person, it may refer to the arts – literature, painting, the opera, etc. the word 'culture' means as well an integral system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the member of any given society. Culture is the total way of life of any group of people. When these patterns of culture, which are built into each other of us, encounter other and different patterns of culture... – conflict, dissonance and disorientation are the almost inevitable results.

Communication takes place in the medium of one culture, which facilitates and reinforces it, but also hides it. We stumble over it continuously – even if we have learnt the language. That is because not only do languages vary from country to country, but so do communication styles, especially codes of non-verbal communication, code models underlying cognitive perception in interaction of cultures.

Perception is at the heart of cross-cultural communication. We misperceive, misinterpret and misunderstand each other all the time, even when we share many values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of doing, being and thinking. When you are in your own culture there are dozens of little clues which help to convey meaning: gestures, facial expressions, body language, eye contact, voice inflections – all occur automatically and are interpreted immediately without conscious thought. All this once again stresses the necessity of cultural education and underlines how important the role of EFL teachers may be. Cross-cultural communication is the medium for finding out what expectations are creating trust and sincerity and good will. It is the method of anticipating problems and solving them, it is the channel for reaching out and establishing links with people. To speak English today means to be intelligible to a wide range of other English speakers and to understand a wide range of Englishes. And of course this is the responsibility, the challenge every teacher of English faces.

There is definitely the question whether there should be any norm in teaching English as a foreign language. EFL teachers and compilers of EFL courses claim that there should be no standard English, no norm in EFL teaching, because English is becoming a global language and learners should be able to communicate in the global village environment, and, thus. They should be taught varieties, dialects, accents, should be able to recognize and understand them.

It is true, learners and users of English face the vast spread of English which increases the awareness of the multiple and varied standard and nonstandard language models. We know that

EFL teachers and material developers try to acknowledge and incorporate language varieties in teaching materials. To me it SEEMS quite disputable. Here I would like to support M. Kaul, that when “everyone speaks linguistic freedom the teacher has to speak linguistic responsibility” [2].

Non-understanding, misunderstanding are the results of semantic asymmetry and conceptual difference; that is why, today, the strongest point of any EFL teacher is not erudition but the experience of language contacts. The new role of the teacher is that of a model of a successful language learner.

At present EFL teacher meets the challenges of teaching on an integral global basis. The teacher forms students' shared cultural background in order to help them build bridges from one culture to another to raise awareness and increase knowledge and understanding of cultural dimensions, in short, the teacher is responsible for cultural literacy. That is why classroom activities today should be designed to raise awareness regarding the globalization of English, should provide a certain cultural insight, because it is clear that global English due to its characteristics affects and gets effected by cultures in contact. This brings about changes into, for example, naming practice, forms of address and individuals' self-identity. That is why EFL teachers face the task of improving their learners' proficiency through introduction of cultural issues into English classroom. Cultural literacy, cross-cultural education should involve various aspects from background knowledge to cultural differences, thus helping to do away with misunderstanding.

I think there is no need to point out that language learning and cultural learning are linked, cultural literacy takes time, just as well as learning language does. At present the language is characterized by an extensive vocabulary but restricted grammar and simplified syntax and phonetics. This, to the idea of many, helps to achieve good understanding, on the other hand, as S. Ter-Minasova puts it, using "one international" language for international communication might lead leveling all other language speaking nations [3]. That is why EFL teacher should have broader educational goals, those developing mind and scope of vision, they should create the atmosphere of understanding and psychological comfort for the speakers and learners of English in order to achieve cultural understanding and what is more or equally important – awareness of their own identity.

In fact this discussion boils down to the one most essential all-embracing challenge – to bridge the gap between semantic and cultural understanding. Every culture is ethnocentric, it thinks its own solutions are superior and would be recognized. To each people their own view of the world appears to be the "common sense" or "natural" view. We form preconceived stereotypes about the nations, we generalize by using the past incidents to predict the behavior of the nationality, culture-imposed conventions or stereotypes, overgeneralizations are necessary to overcome. In this respect, lowering our defenses and viewing ourselves through the eyes of the people from other cultures, from what is called the "cross-cultural perspective" we can get a striking refreshing view of ourselves. I do believe that every culture has a rough balance between positive and negative aspects. Therefore, to point out the weaker or more negative aspects along with the positive ones in the process of examining a culture or value system does not constitute the attack on that culture. For me, to become store aware of any cultural self in its fullest dimension is a source of strength because it reinforces my real worth rather than ethnocentric view of reality.

EFL teachers also face the challenge of new paradigm for linguistic research, language teaching and learning. The new global economy based on digits and data has replaced the old one based on machines. EFL teacher needs to adapt to the demands of new economy and globalization. Authentic English plus sophisticated software provide new possibilities. Today,

sources are available through many media. Internet-based on-line and off-line activities, international TV programmes, e-mail as an inexpensive and convenient tool, participating in discussion forums, newsgroups, chat, blogs, etc. All this helps teachers to share information, resources, materials and new ideas with their colleagues, get access to the archives, the bank of EFL materials, lesson plans, and computer software.

One more point is that we must certainly explore further possibilities of institutional cooperation, of regional cooperation, analyze the role and impact of Western consultancies, visitors' programmes, etc. thus may be the subject for special discussion. In conclusion, I would like to remind you the definition of the verb challenge. It means to offer interesting difficulties. Yes, any challenge is a demanding task, it is a difficult task but it is rewarding, and we all are aware of it.

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