Язык и литература: теория и практика

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THE USE OF NEWSPAPER FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OF EFL LEARNERS'

Abstract. The present article examines the influence of a newspaper, as the main source of cultural knowledge, on the development of intercultural communicative competence of ESL learners. A series of online questionnaires was conducted to gather information about first-year students' Britishculture knowledge. This included determining the type of authentic materials and the knowledge assessment test on United Kingdom culture. As a result, the digital format of the newspaper "The Times" was chosen as the authentic material to enhance students' reading skills. The test results indicated the level of understanding of United Kingdom culture leading to the creation of a task bank comprising collaborative discussions, individual reflections, and analytical exercises. Through the implementation of a comprehensive bank of reading tasks and articles covering various aspects of UK culture, students engaged in a rewarding learning experience. The post-test results confirm the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing students' comprehension of UK culture and traditions.

Key words: intercultural communicative competence, reading skill, foreign language education, authentic material, newspaper.

Conflict of interests:

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Introduction

In the context of the contemporary educational setting, in the field of teaching foreign languages, "the main goal is the development of a linguistic personality capable of carrying out intercultural communication in all its spheres. It implies that teaching English through the development of socio-cultural competence is the most promising approach in the sphere of students'education" (Kunanbayeva, 2010a, p. 181). Methodologists, specialized in foreign language education have concluded that the modern

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learning process should be oriented at getting new skills, especially communicative ones, rather than gathering information and remembering facts. In an English as a Second Language classroom, "cultural difference and expectation can be a barrier to learning, engagement and communication" (Baker, 2012, p. 48).

In Kazakhstan, the integration of culture into the foreign language curriculum has become increasingly common in recent years, gaining popularity and respect. Currently, our country is on its way of entering scientific and global educational environment, and the complex process intercultural interaction and interpretation are constantly trying to be implemented within teaching practices. "There is an indisputable common view that the knowledge of the culture, values and national characteristics of foreign language allows language to be fully used as the means for intercultural communication and that this is a precondition for mutual-understanding between individuals and societies from different cultures generally" (Kunanbayeva, 2010b, p.74).

Nowadays, the Kazakhstan education system faces the task of preparing specialists ready forcultural, personal, professional communication with representatives of countries with different social traditions, social structure, mentality and linguistic culture. Highlighting the importance of cultural aspect, according to the document of the state standard of higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, teaching a foreign language, among other disciplines of the standard, should be aimed at:

• developing the worldview, civic and moral positions of a future specialist, competitive on the basis of mastery of information and communication technologies, building communication programs in Kazakh, Russian and foreign languages, focusing on a healthy lifestyle, self- improvement and professional success;

• form a system of general competencies that ensure the socio-cultural development of the personality of the future specialist based on the formation of his/her ideological, civic and moral positions;

• develop abilities for interpersonal social and professional communication in Kazakh, Russian and foreign languages (On approval of state compulsory standards .., 2022).

In accordance with the Concept for the Development of Foreign Language Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, language is an indicator of culture, reflects sociocultural reality and promotes appropriate communication with representatives of other linguistic societies. However, in Kazakhstan, English language classes primarily focus on linguisticaspects such as vocabulary, set phrases, grammar, sentence structure etc. An introduction to the target culture, like social customs, religions and history, is seldom included in the classes (Atygaeva & Temirgazina, 2024). In those terms, the system of higher education is the cornerstone of the country's policymakingas it offers an in-depth understanding of the global picture as it will guarantee a successful intercultural communication.

One of the promising and possible ways to broader learning process within the line of that aim, according to many teaching practices, is to increase the level of students' reading skills. Based on the statement above, it can be proposed that in the system of higher foreign education there is a need to develop reading skills of students who are able not only to effectively carry out pedagogical activities in the context of multilingual education, but who are also ready to be professionally realized in the conditions of intercultural professional interaction.

As a result, to establish an innovative, sustainable, and high-quality educational

system we need to take into account-the cultural aspects of teaching of foreign language education. Moreover, to compete in the global community, we must communicate effectively and appreciate, understand and be able to work within the framework of other cultures.

Material and Methods

The following study took place at the Eurasian National University named after L.N. Gumilyov with the aim to understand on what level participants aware of foreign culture in various aspects of language being studied, while working with the newspaper as the key language teaching material.

The study was conducted in two groups of 1st year bachelor students of education program "6B011900 – Foreign language: two foreign languages" who were taught the subject of "Basic Course of Foreign Language (A2 level) in terms of our pedagogical experiment. As to the number of participants, 25 students participated in the study. As a result, our experimental learning lasted from September till December 2023 in the third semester. We had practical lessons 3 hours in a week for both groups. The objectives of the investigation were gained with the help of different methods of research, such as analysis, survey, quantitative research methods.

The survey with questionnaire is considered to be as one of the common methods of collecting opinions and data from a large group of people, and "it has been used to investigate a wide variety of questions in second language research" (Brown, 2010, p. 93). Therefore, a series of online questionnaires was carried out to all participants to elicit information about their experience of implementing newspaper to improve intercultural communicative competence it in their lessons.

As a result of discussion and statistical data, gathered, we have concluded, the notable recognition of "The Times" among the participants. It has informed our decision to focus on this particular British newspaper in our language teaching approach. Recognizing its wide familiarity among the students, we have tailored our instructional materials and activities to incorporate contentfrom The Times, leveraging its editorial richness to enhance language learning. Given the survey results indicating a notable preference for the digital format of the newspaper, we have decided to structure our language teaching lessons with a primary focus on digital articles (L. Mialkovska, L. Zhvanina, M. Yablonskyy, V. Hrysiuk, 2023). So that we have given the students the bank of tasks through the website https://freemagazines.top.

We have conducted a survey titled: "United Kingdom culture and beyond". By conducting this assessment, we seek to measure the depth of participants' knowledge about the target culture, enabling us to identify any gaps or areas that may require additional attention.

The knowledge assessment test on United Kingdom culture comprises 40 questions, each worth 1 mark. The questions cover a wide range of topics, including national symbols, cultural elements, historical events, geography, and various aspects of British life. Participants are required to select the correct answer from multiple-choice options, with the aim of evaluating their knowledge and understanding of the United Kingdom. The scoring criteria offer a detailed perspective, categorizing participants into different levels based on their performance. The Table 1 represents thefollowing:

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Scale Score	Grade	Percentage	Culture awareness level
35-40	A	80–100%	Excellent
25–34	В	70–79%	Good
15–24	С	60–69%	Moderate
5-14	D	50–59%	Limited
0-4	F	Below 50%	Insufficient

Table 1. UK Culture Test evaluation criteria (https://www.officiallifeintheuk.co.uk)

Results and Discussion

In the experimental group, the results of the United Kingdom culture knowledge assessment showcase a diverse distribution of participants across different levels of awareness. The majority of participants, constituting 38.5%, fall within the category of "Excellent," indicating an exceptional performance of United Kingdom culture. This group exhibits a high level of proficiency, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of national symbols, historical events, and cultural aspects of UK.

In the Figure 1, following closely, 30.8% of participants achieved a "Good" level of awareness. This segment reflects a solid foundation of knowledge, with individuals displaying commendable understanding across a range of topics related to the United Kingdom.

A notable portion of the experimental group, 23.1%, falls into the "Moderate" category. Participants in this range exhibit a moderate level of awareness, indicating a basic understanding of key cultural elements but also highlighting areas where further study and improvement may be beneficial. Lastly, 7.7% of participants are categorized as having a "Limited" level of awareness. Individuals in this group face challenges in answering a significant number of questions correctly, suggesting the need for focused study and targeted interventions to enhance their understanding of United Kingdom culture.

Notably, the experimental group showed no participants in the insufficient category, suggesting that all participants possessed at least a basic level of understanding of United Kingdom culture. This absence of insufficient scores reflects positively on the baseline awareness within the experimental group. These results offer valuable insights into the baseline knowledge of the experimental group, providing a foundation for assessing the impact of the pedagogical approach on cultural awareness development throughout the course of the study.

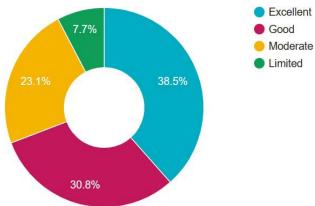


Fig. 1. The pre-experimental results of UK Culture test in the experimental group

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The outcomes of the United Kingdom culture knowledge assessment in the control group reveal a detailed distribution of performance levels among the participants.

According to the Figure 2, notably, 16.7% of individuals demonstrated an excellent level of awareness. This subset showcased a commendable command of various aspects of British culture, indicating a depth of understanding across the diverse topics covered in the assessment. Their performance suggests a heightened cultural awareness in navigating the subject matter.

Furthermore, 25% of participants in the group fall within the good category. Individuals in this bracket exhibited a solid foundation of knowledge, demonstrating a commendable grasp of key cultural elements related to the United Kingdom. While not reaching the level of excellence, this group showcases a well-rounded understanding, contributing positively to their cultural awareness.

A substantial majority, comprising 50%, falls into the moderate category. Participants in this range displayed a moderate level of awareness, indicating a foundational understanding of United

Kingdom culture. Their performance suggests areas of proficiency alongside potential gaps that couldbenefit from targeted interventions and further exploration. Additionally, 8.3% of participants exhibited a limited level of awareness in the control group. While this group faced challenges with certain aspects of the assessment, their performance indicates a foundational understanding. With focused support and additional learning opportunities, they have the potential to progress to higher levels of cultural awareness.

Remarkably, the control group showed no participants in the insufficient category, indicating that all participants possessed at least a basic level of understanding of United Kingdom culture. This absence of insufficient scores underscores the effectiveness of the instructional approach in establishing a foundational cultural awareness within the control group.

The comparison between the control group and the experimental group in the United Kingdomculture knowledge assessment reveals distinctive patterns in their levels of awareness.

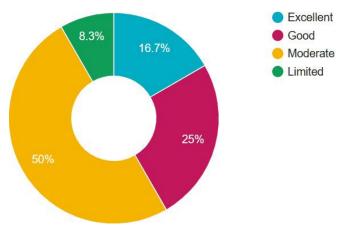


Fig. 2. The results of UK Culture test in the control group

Following the pre-test phase, we initiated an assessment of students' perception about the implementation of newspaper in their reading practices and identifying shortcomings to be improved for further research. This survey comprises thoughtfully crafted questions aimed at delving into learners' perspectives, experiences, and preferences regarding the incorporation of English newspapers in their language learning practices.

This assessment took the form of a structured survey, with the use of Google Forms, designed to delve into various aspects of learners reading behaviors, preferences, and challenges. In addition to multiple-choice questions, participants were given opportunities to express their thoughts on specific topics through open-ended questions.

We were aimed to understand how participants conceptualize the role of newspapers in exposing them to diverse cultural contexts. The question, "Through reading newspapers, how do youbelieve cultural awareness can be enhanced?" is aimed at investigating participants' perceptions regarding the potential impact of newspaper reading on the development of cultural awareness.

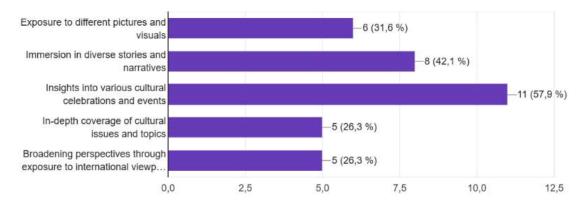


Fig. 3. Through reading newspapers, how do you believe cultural awareness can be enhanced?

The Figure 3 reveals a detailed perspective on the multifaceted ways participants perceive newspapers as contributors to cultural awareness. A notable 57.9% of students emphasized that newspapers provide insights into various cultural celebrations and events, indicating an appreciation for the role of newspapers in presenting diverse cultural practices. Immersion in diverse stories and narratives resonated with 42.1% of participants, highlighting the importance of storytelling in cultivating cultural awareness.

Exposure to different pictures and visuals was acknowledged by 31.6% of students, underlining the visual component as a means to enhance understanding. Additionally, indepth coverage of cultural issues and topics, as well as the broadening of perspectives through exposure to international viewpoints, each garnered recognition from 26.3% of participants. This distribution reflects a comprehensive understanding among students of the ways in which newspapers serve as valuable tools for fostering cultural awareness through diverse content and perspectives. The next question is closely correlated with the previous one and it is aimed at exploring participants' perceptions regarding the adequacy of newspapers in capturing the richness and diversity different cultures: "Do you think that newspapers adequately represent and portray various cultures?".

By posing this question, we seek to understand whether learners believe that newspapers effectively portray the cultural elements, traditions, and identities of various societies. The responsesto this question will provide valuable insights into the participants' assessments of the cultural authenticity presented in newspapers. Язык и литература: теория и практика

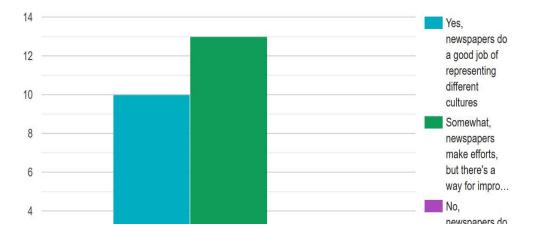


Fig. 4. Do you think that newspapers adequately represent various cultures?

From Figure 4, it can be seen, that a majority of 52% of participants expressed a somewhat positive view, acknowledging that newspapers make efforts, yet there is a way for improvement in adequately representing various cultures. A substantial 40% held a more affirmative stance, asserting that newspapers indeed do a good job in representing different cultures. Conversely, a smaller but noteworthy 8% of students felt that newspapers do not adequately portray various cultures.

This distribution highlights a diverse range of opinions among the participants, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement and attention to cultural representation within the context of newspaper content in language teaching. This inquiry contributes to our investigation into the cultural spects of newspaper-based language teaching, offering perspectives on the extent to which learnersperceive newspapers as reliable sources for gaining a well-rounded understanding of different cultures.

As a result of conducted intervention, we had the following results. The remarkable improvement in the post-intervention in the experimental group is deeply rooted with learners' activeengagement with newspaper articles and the accompanying reading tasks. The tasks assigned were thoughtfully designed to challenge and enhance their intercultural communicative competence. Collaborative discussions, individual reflections, and analytical exercises further complemented the learning process. Following the targeted intervention that incorporated newspaper articles as a tool for cultural exposure and understanding, the post-intervention results showcased a reasonable improvement in students' cultural awareness.

The excellent performance level experienced a notable increase from 38.5% (5 students) to 53.8% (7 students), indicating a significant enhancement in their grasp of UK customs and traditions. The good performance level remained consistent at 30.8% (4 students), demonstrating a sustained understanding of cultural aspects. Meanwhile, the moderate performance category saw a decrease from 23.1% (3 students) to 15.4% (2 students), suggesting that the intervention contributed to refining the students' knowledge to a higher degree. Encouragingly, the limited performance category recorded a complete elimination, signifying that no students fell into this category after the intervention.

Recognizing the significance of real-world exposure and authentic language usage, the intervention focused on newspaper articles that describe diverse aspects of UK culture, including customs, traditions, social norms, and current events. Students were actively engaged in tasks and activities designed to promote critical thinking, analysis,

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and discussion based on the information gleaned from these newspaper articles.

The intervention aimed to foster a dynamic and interactive learning environment, encouraging students to explore and comprehend the material related to UK culture embedded in the texts. These post-intervention results underscore the positive impact of incorporating newspaper articles into the curriculum to enhance cultural awareness, as reflected in the substantial improvement across performance levels in the cultural awareness test. The findings affirm the effectiveness of the intervention in deepening students' understanding of UK culture and traditions. To conclude the following findings, we can state, that excellent performance category, reflecting students' profound understanding of UK customs and traditions, demonstrated a remarkable improvement after the intervention.

Prior to the intervention, 38.5% of the students (5 individuals) were classified in the excellent performance level. Following the targeted intervention and engagement with newspaper articles covering diverse aspects of UK culture, this category experienced a substantial shift, reaching 53.8% (7 students).

Conclusion

Through the implementation of a comprehensive bank of reading tasks and articles centered around various aspects of UK culture, students were immersed in an enriching learning experience. The active interaction with the material fostered a dynamic learning environment, where students were not passive recipients but rather active participants, contributing to the overall success of the intervention.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the limited performance category recorded a remarkable achievement through the complete elimination of students falling within this level after the intervention. The absence of students in the limited performance category indicates a successful intervention, suggesting that the implemented strategies effectively addressed the challenges that previously hindered students from grasping certain cultural aspects. This outcome reinforces the notion that incorporating real-world materials, such as newspaper articles, into language learning environments significantly contributes to students' cultural awareness and overall proficiency. The results affirm the effectiveness of targeted language interventions in achieving the desired educationaloutcomes. Through consistent practice and exposure to authentic reading materials, students developed essential skills, including the ability to summarize information, extract key details, and draw logical conclusions from texts. The incorporation of multiple task types not only enriched their vocabulary but also boosted their analytical and critical thinking skills. Students were encouraged to interact with the content actively, fostering a deeper understanding of the texts and promoting effective reading strategies and intercultural communicative competence.

The aim of the post-test, which comprised 45 questions and focused on UK culture, was to systematically evaluate and quantify the impact of the intervention on the cultural awareness of the participants, particularly within the experimental group.

The data clearly demonstrates that there was a significant improvement in cultural awareness within the experimental group following the intervention involving the implementation of the bank of reading tasks. On the other hand, upon analyzing the results of the second test focused on UK culture, it is notable that the control group did not exhibit a significant improvement in contrast to the experimental group. The contrastive descriptive statistics indicate that, despite the passage of time, the control group's cultural

awareness remained relatively stable.

This lack of substantial progress suggests that the traditional teaching methods employed in the control group may not have been as effective in enhancing cultural understanding compared to the targeted intervention implemented in the experimental group. The data underscores theimportance of innovative language teaching approaches, such as the incorporation of a bank offreading tasks, in achieving meaningful improvements in cultural awareness among language learners.

The purpose of the experimental part of the research was to empirically verify the effectiveness of the developed bank of reading tasks in improving the reading skills of 1st-yearstudents enrolled in linguistic specialties at Eurasian National University. Statistical analysis provided a quantitative lens through which we could objectively measure and evaluate the impact of the intervention we have provided.

This phase aimed to provide tangible evidence and validate the hypothesis that the foreign language teaching process becomes more effective when grounded in the determined theoretical foundations of reading skill development and complemented by a well-crafted task bank.

By conducting the experimental check, we sought to assess the pedagogical effectiveness of the proposed methodology in real-world educational settings. Our goal was to explore the learners' experiences, perceptions and the effectiveness of using newspapers as a key source of foreign cultural realia and authentic material to enhance reading skills successfully.

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СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ МӘДЕНИЕТАРАЛЫҚ КОММУНИКАТИВТІ ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІГІН ДАМЫТУ ҮШІН ГАЗЕТТІ ПАЙДАЛАНУ

Аңдатпа. Мақалада ағылшын тілін оқитын студенттердің мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілігін дамытуда газеттің мәдениет туралы білімнің қайнар көзі ретінде маңыздылығы қарастырылады. Бірінші курс студенттерінің Британдық мәдениет туралы білімі деңгейі бойынша ақпарат алу мақсатында бірқатар онлайн сауалнамалар жүргізілді. Оның ішіне ағылшын тілі сабағында қолданылатын түпнұсқалық материал түрлерін анықтауға арналған сауалнама және Британдық мәдениет туралы білімін бағалауға арналған тест кіреді. Білім алушылардың оқу дағдыларын жетілдіру мақсатында сандық форматтағы Британдық «Times» газеті түпнұсқалық материал ретінде таңдап алынды. Тест нәтижелері Британия мәдениеті туралы білімнің түрлі деңгейлерін анықтады және тапсырмалар банкін құруға ықпал етті. Тапсырмалар банкіне топтық дискуссия, жеке тапсырмалар және аналитикалық жаттығулар кіреді. Британдық мәдениеттің түрлі аспектілеріне арналған мақалалар мен оқу дағдыларын дамытуға арналған тапсырмалардың ауқымды қорын оқу үрдісіне енгізу нәтижесінде білім алушылар нақты оқу тәжірибесін жинақтады. Тестілеуден кейінгі нәтижелер студенттердің Британия мәдениеті мен дәстүрі туралы білімін арттыру бойынша тапсырмалардың тиімділігіне көз жетікізеді.

Түйінді сөздер: мәдениетаралық коммуникативті құзыреттілік, оқу дағдысы, шет тілінен білім беру, түпнұсқалық материал, газета.

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ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ГАЗЕТЫ ДЛЯ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ

Аннотация. В настоящей статьерассматривается влияние газеты как основного источника культурных знаний на развитие межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции студентов, изучающих английский язык. Была проведена серия онлайн-анкет для получения информации об уровне знаний британской культуры у студентов первого курса университета. Среди них была анкета по выявлению типа аутентичного материала, который будет использоватьсяна занятиях по английскому языку, и тест по оценке знаний о культуре Великобритании. В результате в качестве аутентичного материала для совершенствования навыков чтения обучающихся был выбран цифровой формат британской газеты «Таймс». Результаты теста выявили разные уровни знаний о культуре Великобритании, что привело к созданию банка заданий. Он включает в себя такие задания, как совместные дискуссии, индивидуальные задания и аналитические упражнения. Благодаря внедрению обширного банка заданий по развитию навыков чтению и статей, посвященных различным аспектам британской культуры, обучающиеся получили определенный учебный опыт. Результаты пост-тестирования подтверждают эффективность заданий по улучшению понимания студентами культуры и традиций Великобритании.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, чтение, обучение иностранному языку, аутентичный материал, газета.

Authors contribution

Khamitova G. – research methodology, writing – review and editing.

Aubakirova A. – formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, visualization.