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## DEVELOPING SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE OF UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS MAJORING IN ECONOMICS IN THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE MASTERING

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У статті порушено проблему пошуку нових прийомів формування соціокультурної компетенції майбутніх економістів. Проаналізовано поняття «соціокультурна компетенція» як один з основних компонентів комунікативної компетентності. Висвітлено ідеї українських та зарубіжних вчених з цієї проблеми. Виявлено соціокультурні особливості англійського економічного дискурсу. Запропоновано групу навчальних інтерактивних завдань з розвитку соціокультурних вмінь студентів-економістів на заняттях з іноземної мови.

**Ключові слова:** соціокультурна компетенція, майбутні економісти, оволодіння іноземною мовою, інтерактивні навчальні завдання.

В статье затронута проблема поиска новых приемов формирования социокультурной компетенции будущих экономистов в процессе обучения иностранным языкам. Проанализировано понятие «социокультурная компетенция» как один из основных компонентов коммуникативной компетенции. Проанализированы идеи украинских и зарубежных ученых по этой проблеме. Выявлены социокультурные особенности английского экономического дискурса. Представлена группа интерактивных образовательных заданий для развития социокультурных умений студентов-экономистов на занятиях по иностранному языку.

**Ключевые слова:** социокультурная компетенция, будущие экономисты, овладение иностранным языком, интерактивные учебные задания.

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This article focuses on the problem of developing sociocultural competence of Ukrainian University students majoring in economics in the process of foreign language mastering. The notion “sociocultural competence” as one of the major components of the foreign language communicative competency is analyzed. The ideas of Ukrainian and foreign scholars on this problem are highlighted. The linguistic and sociocultural characteristics of the English economics discourse are brought to light. A group of educational tasks as interactive teaching methods of developing future economists’ sociocultural skills are offered.

**Key words:** sociocultural competence, students majoring in economics, foreign language mastering, interactive educational tasks.

**Introduction.** In the world of today’s rapid changes and innovations the problem of quality higher education is getting especially important. By signing the Bologna Declaration in 2005, Ukraine has chosen the course of integration into the European community. For successful European integration the country needs quick and effective transformations at the national and institutional levels including the cultural aspect which is considered to be increasingly important and significant in terms of employability, career success, competitive abilities and social integration nowadays. Possessing sociocultural knowledge “creates favourable conditions for successful functioning in contemporary labour market. It manifests cultural sensitivity (ability to understand and accept people from other sociocultural backgrounds, maintaining strong position when facing discriminatory actions); cultural aware-

ness (ability to evaluate cultural differences, perceive and accept other person’s attitudes and opinion); cultural knowledge (ability to communicate with people diplomatically, taking into account cultural differences of verbal and non-verbal means of communication)” [1].

According to the words of the famous specialist in the international communication B. Tomalin, “To do business worldwide it isn’t enough just to understand and apply a universal business model. You also have to understand the culture of the people you are dealing with” [5, p. 56].

Analyzing the term “sociocultural competence” we can state that it is a complex phenomenon which has been under detailed study for a number of years. Its main aspects were highlighted in the works of many prominent scholars (H. Brown, 1987; N. Borisko, 1997; N. Bragina, 1996; I. Zimnyia, 2005;



R.Lado, 1989; Yu. Passov, 2000; V. Safonova, 1996; O. Tarnopolsky, 2004; S. Ter-Minasova, 2000; G. Tomahin, 2001; B. Tomalin & S. Stempleski, 1996; T. Van Dijk, 2008 and others). The ideas concerning “sociocultural competence development” found their way in the works of the contemporary Ukrainian and foreign researchers. Formation of foreign-language sociocultural competence was done by means of: conducting out-of-class activities (N. Shilina, 2005); reading journalistic (O. Biryuk, 2006) and fiction (M. Dukha, 2015) texts; teaching phraseology (K. Balabukha, 2007), speech etiquette (M. Ogrenich, 2011), folk materials (N. Bachynska, 2014); conducting contextual analysis of the authentic texts (T. McConachy, 2009); working with language learning strategies (S. Deneme, 2011); using Internet resources (M. Handford, 2015), computer work (I. Bachynska, 2015), information and research project work (Yu. Bevzin, 2016). A. Fantini (2009) introduced the Assessment scale for intercultural communication. J. Feng (2016) offered mixed classroom interactions for students from different cultures and ethnicities to experience new multicultural environments and acquire intercultural knowledge.

**The aims** are: to define the essence of sociocultural competency of students’ majoring in economics; to determine the linguistic peculiarities of English economic discourse; to work out a complex of educational tasks aimed at developing sociocultural competence of students majoring in economics in the process of the English language mastering, to prove the efficacy of the suggested educational tasks. The object of our work is future economists’ sociocultural competence. The subject is the organization of work on sociocultural competence development of students majoring in economics while learning foreign languages.

**Methods.** The aim of this article was obtained through these scientific methods: review of the existing methods of sociocultural competency development; determining the advantages and disadvantages of the analysed teaching methods; carrying out the linguistic analysis of the English sociocultural material on definite economic topics; pilot training of 60 students majoring in economics (from Odessa trade and economics institute) that highlights the effectiveness of the offered teaching techniques; education process monitoring; assessment of the students’ sociocultural knowledge and skills.

**Concept analysis.** First of all it should be noted that the concept “sociocultural competence” is interpreted by A. Shchukin [4] as a phenomenon that embraces national and cul-

tural peculiarities of the social and speech behavior of the native speakers: their customs, etiquette, social stereotypes, history and culture of the country, as well as ways of using such knowledge in the process of communication. G. Vorobjev [7, p. 32] defines “socio-cultural competence as a complex phenomenon that includes a set of components belonging to different categories”. V. Milrud [3, p. 31] underlines that “sociocultural competence refers to the activity-component of communicative competence”. As for the ideas of T. Van Dijk [6, p. 33], the scholar defines “sociocultural competence as the knowledge of national-cultural peculiarities of the country the language of which is under study and the ability to build verbal and non-verbal behavior in accordance with this specificity”.

Taking into account the existing definitions of this term we can consider this phenomenon as knowledge of the cultural peculiarities of speech behavior and the ability acquired by the participants of the intercultural communication to use adequately this knowledge in accordance with the existing communicative situation.

Sociocultural competence according to A. Nader and A. Davoud [3, p. 140] includes the following components: 1) linguistic-cultural – knowledge of lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics (e.g., greeting, forms of address, and farewell, in oral and written speech); 2) sociolinguistic – knowledge of the language features of social classes, different generations, genders, social groups; 3) cultural component – knowledge of cultural peculiarities of English-speaking countries, their habits, traditions, standards of behaviour, etiquette and the ability to understand and use them appropriately in the communication process, while being a carrier of another culture. We consider it necessary to analyse the above-mentioned components in regard to the English economic discourse.

First of all it is worth mentioning the words-realia which belong to the economic sphere, contain sociocultural information within the word and don’t have a complete equivalent in the native language. For example, the word “pound” – the basic monetary unit of the UK, equal to 100 pence; the word “shilling” – a former British coin and monetary unit equal to one twentieth of a pound or twelve pence; the expressions “blue sky laws” (the laws of the states in the USA issued in 1993, which regulate the issue of the securities and their realization within the states), “the Big Four” (4 major companies that work in the financial audit arena: PnC, KPMY, Deloitte, Ernst&Young); “Wall Street” (1.1 km street running eight blocks, where financial markets of



the United States (all financial sectors) are situated).

Phraseological units also play a significant role in developing sociocultural competence. For example, such units as: a cutting-edge technology, a bull market, a bear market, a monkey business, black money, to get a business off the ground. The units with emotional colouring are kept in the students' minds thanks to a vivid picture which is created by a general image of the expression. But on the other hand, we should use phraseological units very carefully. Even the English-speaking countries often have different meanings in them. For example, the expression "to table the negotiations" means for the US delegation that they want to delay a decision while their British partners understand the expression to mean that immediate action is to be taken; the expression "to bomb the negotiations" means for the British people that they were successful, for the Americans - quite the opposite meaning.

The next cultural-linguistic point which attracts our attention is allusion which demonstrates a brief and indirect reference to a definite person, place, thing, idea of historical, cultural, economic, political significance. For example, the negative effect of crisis in economy is called "Titanic; financial 9/11; Winnie-the-Pooh economy", deceit - "Trojan horse", a desperate situation - "Between Scylla and Charybdis", the source of endless wealth - "Klondike; Eldorado", a new person in business - "Johny Newcomer".

Speaking about sociocultural norms of business communication it is necessary to accentuate on the differences which exist in the economic discourse of different countries. For example, in the USA it is not customary for businessmen who know each other to shake hands at every meeting - *handshakes* are more for the situations of introduction. If a person from Ukraine stretches his hand for a handshake every time he meets his American colleagues, the American businessmen may be quite surprised or even a little annoyed; Americans value *punctuality* very much. If any appointment is made, American may be expected to *come exactly at the appointed time*. They will expect the same from others, and in business, if someone is late, this person can hardly count on successful talks. Americans *value their privacy* very much and do not mean to let other people approach too close. Any *invitations* made by Americans, concerning either professional or social visits, can be declined without offending the person who has invited. The only thing is the explanation of the reason.

**Results.** Within this work we are going to present our methodological recommendations

how to develop sociocultural competence of students majoring in economics while learning foreign languages. For providing our experimental study we have chosen groups of the third-year students who are taught at the specialities 6030508 "Finance and Credit" and 6030509 "Accounting and Auditing" in Odessa Institute of Trade and Economics. Because of a small number of academic hours which are meant for the discipline "Foreign language" we can't devote the whole class time only to developing sociocultural competence of students. That's why we involve the tasks aimed at enriching the students with sociocultural knowledge into the corresponding educational process and into out-of-class activity.

In this regard, the following educational tasks as interactive teaching methods of developing future economists' sociocultural skills are offered: exercises on learning lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics (for example, "Mind-map", "Wordbuilder", "Fading technique", "Crosswords", "Defining equivalent / non-equivalent lexical units", "Video activity with multi-tasking"); exercises on understanding socio-cultural information extracted from English economic texts ("Defining comprehension", "Interacting with texts", "Filling information gaps"); exercises on reproduction of socio-cultural information ("Reporting about the text", "Reproduction of a text/dialogue", "Comparative analysis of peculiarities of national and foreign country business culture"); exercises on activation and consolidation of socio-cultural material ("Fishbowl technique", "Brainstorming", "Discussion", "Business games", "Simulations"); professionally oriented exercises ("Method of projects", "Case method"). In this work we demonstrate a group of exercises that can be applied at the summing up lessons while learning a definite professional topic. Let us illustrate the exercises on the topic "Finance".

**Exercise 1.** 1) Get acquainted with the following terms and their explanations: *High finance* - involves large amounts of money used by government and large companies; *Financial year* - any annual period at the end of which a firm's accounts are made up; *the Square Mile* - the City, a major business centre in London called so after its approximate size (1,12 mile or 2.90 km<sup>2</sup>); *Main kinds of credit cards* - American Express, MasterCard, Eurocard, Visa, Access; *Traveller's cheque* - a cheque for a fixed amount that may be cashed or used in payment abroad after endorsement by the holder's signature. 2) Check up your knowledge of the above mentioned terms. Try to finish the following statements: 1. Major world credit cards are ...2. The Square Mile is ... 3. High finance is ...3) Make up a mind map.





**Exercise 2.** You are requested to be ready to speak about financial matters in the USA. Try to answer the following questions.

1. All US coins are a) white in color and of different sizes; b) are dark yellow and of one size except nickels which are white and of bigger size; c) are white in color except pennies that are dark yellow and of different sizes.

2. Banks are open to the public: a) all the time working 24 hours a day; b) from 9.00 (10.00) am until about 2.00 (3.00) pm from Monday to Friday excluding holidays; c) from 9.00 (10.00) AM until about 5.00 (6.00) PM from Monday to Friday including holidays.

3. A teller is: a) a person who tells you what to do in the bank; b) a cashier in the bank; c) a person who talks too much.

**Exercise 3.** Find the information in the Internet on different ways of payment in the UK, the USA and in Ukraine. Compare them. Discuss these differences in your group and make a list of the principal ones. Present your ideas to the class basing on such questions: 1) Are there any differences between the payments for some goods or services in Ukraine, the UK and the USA? 2) What are the causes of such distinctions? 3) How to make payments in these countries properly?

**Exercise 4.** Read the information below. Discuss with your partner the client's behavior in the USA bank and write down if the Ukrainians' behavior is similar to it.

"When you come to open your account and the employee who is to deal with you is engaged with another customer, do not approach the desk where they are talking – and by no means interrupt their conversation. When employee is serving another person, it is considered rude to interrupt and interfere. Even if you think your business to be urgent, you will not be helped until your turn comes, but your interference will be strongly resented".

"If somebody is using ATM at the moment, do not cross the "individual barrier" i.e. do not approach closer than 5 or 6 meters. Remember that if somebody is making a transaction with ATM card and you approach and stand behind her/his back, she/he may call the police – and you are in for a lot of trouble".

**Exercise 5.** Do the following sociocultural quiz.

1. Coins in the USA have the following denominations:

a) 5 denominations; b) 8 denominations; c) 10 denominations;

2. Coins of 1c denomination are called:

a) pennies; b) nickels; c) cents.

3. You can change your paper money into coins:

a) using vending machines which usually contain bill-changing device; b) only in banks; c) in any store.

4. Major credit cards: a) are cards provided by the major banks of the USA; b) are internationally accepted or US accepted credit cards; c) are the credit cards accepted only in the USA.

5. When you are standing in the line in the US bank: a) you are not allowed to approach the other persons dealing with the bank employee; b) you may stand as near to the other persons as you wish; c) you are not allowed to cross the barrier until your turn to approach the counter comes.

**Exercise 6.** You are going to take part in the discussion on personal development between American and Ukrainian students. Try to explain the meaning of the word "success" from the point of view of Americans and Ukrainians.

**Exercise 7.** Discuss common and distinctive features of making payments in the USA and Ukraine. Which of the distinctive features do you find the most astonishing and why?

**Exercise 8.** Find information in the Internet and discuss typical differences in stereotypes of Americans and Ukrainians related to financial matters. Make a list of such differences and possible ways of coping with them.

**Exercise 9.** Work in pairs or small groups. Read the following description of the sample situation. "You are the Ukrainian who came to the USA on business. You are going to make payments in different institutions. Role-play the wrong behavior of the Ukrainian and the reaction of the Americans (for instance, standing in the line you don't keep proper distance to the other people/ATM or try to persuade people in the line to let you come first)".

**Exercise 10.** Do you agree with the following English proverbs? Find the meanings of the given proverbs in linguistic dictionaries. Make up situations explaining the meanings of the proverbs. 1. Money begets money. 2. Money is a good servant, but a bad master. 3. Money has no smell. 4. A fool and his money are soon parted.

As for the out-of-class activity we recommended the students of the 3<sup>rd</sup> course to accomplish the cultural project "Start-ups or how to build the successful future" which introduces the background information which can't be mastered just by learning the material but only by means of analyzing, interpreting, understanding it. Such kind of activity was aimed at widening the students' outlook, enriching their knowledge with peculiarities of conducting business negotiations in different countries of the world, acquainting with standard communicative behavioral patterns in business and cultural differences in business communication, corresponding verbal and non-verbal



means of communication, business speech etiquette. Besides, the students had a chance to get acquainted with outstanding people in the business world and their business activity: the businessmen who have already got their fame and reached success in the career ladder and young, newly-born leaders in the business sphere who only start their ways to the top of the world.

The project was divided into some subtopics: 1. New leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs; 2. The newest companies that could change the world; 3. Ukrainian start-ups in the global business arena; 4. The role of start-up incubator in business which contain professional sociocultural information that the students can use in their future professional activity. While preparing the project the students got acquainted with the notion "start-up" which is considered as a temporary structure designed to identify and implement a business model; a new commercial project that is created with the purpose of gaining profit from a business after its successful development; as well as with the notions "angel companies, seed funds, business incubators"; with famous market brands and newly-born ones; start-up communities and creation of the world entrepreneurial culture. The students searched the Internet resources, investigated the most popular start-up projects existing nowadays and selected the most profitable projects in their opinion. They prepared the detailed report about one of them and conducted the comparative analysis of the most distinctive features that contributed to the project's success.

To measure the students' progress, we offered them an entry test and a final test. We have chosen 60 students and divided them into control and experimental groups, the latter ones were educated in accordance with our recommendations. The criteria of the assessment were the following: 1) cognitive-linguistic which showed the students' knowledge of lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics; 2) cultural-perceptive – skills of understanding linguocultural information in the texts; 3) speech-productive – skills of using business linguocultural information in their own speech.

According to the obtained results, we found out that the number of students in the experimental groups who had the low level of sociocultural competence at the entry test decreased by 26,0% and only 15% in the control groups, as well as the number of students with the average level of sociocultural competence rose to 24,0% and 10,5% in the experimental and control groups respectively. Finally, the number of students with the high level in the experimental groups reached 35,5% whereas in the control groups it was 8,5%.

Thus, the results approved that implementation of intercultural education in the classroom of economic students helped to increase their general level of English mastering as well as form a foreign language professional communicative competence needed for future economists for their better integrating into the world business community.

**Conclusions.** Summarizing the information collected, it can be concluded that the sociocultural approach to teaching future economists is aimed at overcoming potential cultural differences that can appear in the process of interaction, giving a chance to understand interlocutors adequately in different social and cultural situations due to communication conditions, prospects and circumstances and in this way to provide a valuable interpersonal communication that lead to a successful business activity. The linguistic peculiarities of the English economic discourse were singled out. They include lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics, language features of social classes/groups, cultural peculiarities of English-speaking countries, standards of behaviour, etiquette. The educational tasks aimed at developing sociocultural competence of students majoring in economics in the process of the English language mastering embrace exercises on learning lexical items with the socio-cultural semantics; exercises on understanding socio-cultural information extracted from English economic texts; exercises on reproduction of socio-cultural information; exercises on activation and consolidation of socio-cultural material; professionally oriented exercises. The obtained results approved the efficacy of the suggested educational tasks and confirmed their expediency in the educational process.

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