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Bridging the Cultural gap in English Language Teaching

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The paper deals with the importance of teaching cross-cultural differences of American and present-day Ukrainian communication styles. For this matter the knowledge of particular stumbling-blocks is crucial for teaching correct patterns in the target language.

Key words: global culture, cross-cultural gaps, cultural patterns.

Бадан А. А. Ліквідація культурних лакун під час вивчення англійської мови. Розглянуто важливість вивчення крос-культурних відмінностей американського та сучасного українського стилів комунікації. Наголошено на потребі знати окремі комунікативні камені спотикання для правильних мовленнєвих моделей.

Ключові слова: глобальна культура, крос-культурні непорозуміння, мовленнєві моделі.

Бадан А. А. Ликвидация культурных лакун при обучении английского языка. Рассматривается важность обучения культурных различий американского и современного украинского стилей коммуникации. Для этого крайне необходимым при обучении правильных речевых моделей в изучаемом языке является осознание отдельных коммуникативных камней преткновения.

Ключевые слова: глобальная культура, кросс-культурные лакуны, речевые модели отдельно взятой культуры.

Description of the problem under consideration and its significance. Language is typically a domain of human interaction with partners having their own certain cultural rules. These rules are deeply rooted both in their different global as well as national and ethnic cultures. In this paper we will disregard individual cultures which are irrelevant in the present research.

The three governing global cultures are individualistic, tribalistic and collectivistic with very clear features of intertwining and alteration throughout the history and due to assimilation.

The two extremes of the above scale of cultural differences are the post-Soviet and American types of communication. The former and the latter respectively represent quasi-collectivistic (or totalitarian) and the individualistic global cultures [2].

Intercultural differences play an especially significant role when societies have greatly differing socioeconomic structures. A Ukrainian does not need to acquire a new approach in communication when travelling to Russia, except for sometimes being humiliated for the Ukrainian accent. Not so for speaking «European» languages: English, German or French: «Students from preindustrial countries must acquire new ways of dealing with others socially and emotionally if they want to communicate successfully in a European language» [1, :78].

Another term for «individualism» is «pluralism» which indicates difference of opinion as a benefit rather than an attack on a student from a post-totalitarian society. Therefore teaching the art of argumentation is one of the most challenging techniques required from an English teacher. It can only be achieved on a long-term basis with the major objective of giving the student a tool to deal with differing opinions by means of discourse.

Exposition of the bulk of material and substantiation of the results obtained in the course of research. Typically Ukrainian students would try to hide away with their own ideas if they confront either the teacher's or the other students'. Silence is their weapon against the domain that still has to be mastered: the art of pragmatic communication, or in other words, the art of argumentation which does not break peace or friendship. In American culture respect for an individual whatever his/her approach to a given issue might be of paramount importance. On the contrary, on the Ukrainian side there might be two modes of behavior: unwillingness to contrasting argumentation or challenging to other Ukrainian students' behaviour, very typical of individualistic cultures. The latter signals the gradual transition of the formerly tribalistic or totalitarian culture towards individualistic acquiring global features.

In either case the role of the teacher is to equip the Ukrainian students with patterns appropriate for a given situation: argumentation does not necessarily intend to hurt: «I am not so sure about it», «I am afraid, I must disagree on this point», etc. Learning such polite patterns of disagreement is a must, and they must be practiced dozens of times to enable fluent communication.

Another issue in American English is the fact that the United States is a verbal culture. Americans see communication as a verbal activity more than a nonverbal one. They believe that in a meeting you are not participating unless you are speaking. They also believe that speaking is the best way to get rid of misunderstanding of conflict. The typical phrase in this situation is «Let's talk things out».

Speaking English involves feedback. Feedback shows: «I'm listening», «I understand», «I don't understand». Most Americans expect a lot of feedback when they are talking, especially in a classroom. Normally US Peace Corps volunteers feel very uncomfortable if they do not receive any feedback from their students. Notably, another issue of cross-cultural importance comes to the fore: that of close partnership «teacher-student» in individualistic cultures. The recent requirement of Ukrainian academic strategies under the Bologna process is creating partner relations with a student which is disguised two-way communication breaking the former teacher leadership and categorical superiority. Isn't it feedback from a student in their communication? When there is no feedback, teachers from the Western world (be they Americans, or French or Germans) would feel uncomfortable.

It's well known that silence is pragmatic. However it gives different information in different cultures. Ukrainians can often be comfortable with each other sharing silence, which indicates peace, musing, thinking over a matter, etc. On the contrary, silence in American English communicates lack of feedback, cooperation, misunderstanding or even communication break. An American speaker faced with silence after presentation could view it a complete failure or complete lack of interest. Therefore it's crucial to teach students simple phrases for feedback: «I'm sorry to hear it» or «I am glad to hear it». It supports interaction, it gives you time to add more and it's so American to be equipped with those phrases. Americans are

talkative and they hate pausing of silence. Thus, an English teacher must give these tips to the students and, moreover, explain the following: in individualistic cultures you mostly hold interpersonal communication, even if you are talking to a group of people. In either case you are to keep eyes contact with each person in turn and talk as if you are addressing each of them personally... That's a far cry from the common totalitarian style of «nailing your ideas» without any feedback or in a military style. Therefore even in a serious meeting or conference a presenter would always like to break the ice with a humorous remark or an opening joke, or just saying «Thank you for coming here instead of staying outside in such beautiful weather».

The above also explains the predicament of former Soviet guides working with Americans in museums. They used to lecture on them rather than hold a friendly conversation addressing each one personally. The result was always dispersing among the rooms leaving such a guide alone. Of course, it involves a lot of ingenuity and creativity to hold a group of Americans together, but unless you are equipped with a ready joke or laughter, or some other trick to show you are talking to everyone in person, you are a failure. So, in the part of teaching students proper reaction to a compliment, it's essential to mention «He will talk non-stop» is a compliment.

One more important issue is interruption. It's common and vital in both cultures, but there is substantial difference in the tone. In any totalitarian culture interruption is not very welcome, because it undermines the importance of a speaker with a higher status. Or if it happens, it still lacks courtesy. Or it never happens due to unwillingness to give feedback. Or just lack of experience. In any case, it's important to point out the difference: Americans encourage people to ask questions, because this is the best way to show your feedback. At the same time students should be taught the appropriate patterns: «Could I ask a question?», «Could I interrupt for a second», «Just a quick interruption, if it's okay», etc.

A very close issue is also checking bits of information. Americans prefer straight talk which needs perfect understanding. It is okay to interrupt the other speaker so that you can make sure you understood what the speaker said. Many Americans want to be reassured that non-native English speakers understand what they have said. Hence the expression «Double-check it». It's easy to teach students checking phrases: «So you mean...», «Do you mean that...», «In other words...», «So you want me...».

In American culture you sometimes hold your turn. It means you need time to think before you speak or before you answer a question. When you hold your turn, you are telling the other person that you have not finished speaking and that you will say something in a few seconds. The most typical of these are: «Well...», «Let me see...», «Let me think...», «Just a second», «Let me try to say this correctly», «Um...», «Uh...» etc.

The same refers to correcting misunderstanding. Once again, it's worthwhile to explain the differences in global cultures. Individualism presupposes softening unpleasant information. Even though Americans are straight-talking, they are at the same time respectful to their partner, therefore before disagreeing with someone they use sounds like «uh» or «uhm», or «well», or stress the modal verb «may» in the phrase «I think you may be wrong». The most common polite ways to correcting another person are:

- «Well... actually it's pronounced as ...»;
- «I think you may be mistaken»;
- «Actually, I understand the opposite».

Some other domains worth mentioning are:

- Using forms of address;
- Greetings and Farewells;
- Making introductions;
- Choosing Words for Complimenting;
- Using Nonverbal and Verbal Communications;
- Summarizing;
- Closings and Farewells and the like.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. According to the authors of a widely-cited practical manual for handling cross-cultural differences [3] «... cultural differences often create predictable communication difficulties for ESL students. To a large extent, the particular background of an individual student will determine the degree of difficulty that he or she may have with a specific cultural pattern of communication... speakers of English... need intensive skill practice in cross-cultural communication».

For Ukrainian students the above requirement is even more crucial due to polar extremes in the American and post-totalitarian both national and global differences.

The accumulation of facts and cases that differentiate the two communication styles would call for the creation of a separate cross-cultural communication course and a practical guide for Ukrainian schools and universities.

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Реінтерпретація міфологічних образів автохтонів в амеріндіанських авторських казках

*Роботу виконано на кафедрі англійської мови
та методики її викладання ХДУ*

У статті висвітлено способи реінтерпретації міфологічних образів фольклорних текстів автохтонного населення Північної Америки в художніх текстах амеріндіанської літератури. Виявлено домінуючі міфологічні образи, актуалізовані в фольклорних текстах і реінтерпретовані в художніх текстах амеріндіанської літератури.

Ключові слова: реінтерпретація, етноархетип, міфологічний образ.

Волкова С. В. Реинтерпретация мифологических образов автохтонов в америндских авторских сказках. В статье раскрываются способы реинтерпретации мифологических образов фольклорных текстов автохтонного населения Северной Америки в художественных текстах америндской литературы. Выявлены доминантные мифологические образы, актуализированные в фольклорных текстах и реинтерпретированные в художественных текстах америндской литературы.

Ключевые слова: реинтерпретация, этноархетип, мифологический образ.

Volkova S. V. Mythological images in American Indians literature. The article focuses on the means of reinterpreting mythological images of folklore texts in American Indians literary texts. Dominant mythological images, actualized in folklore texts of different genres and reinterpreted in literary texts are singled out.

Key words: reinterpretation, ethnoarchetype, concept.

Постановка наукової проблеми та її значення. Фольклорна спадщина американських індіанців стала підґрунтям для подальшого розвитку художньої літератури автохтонного населення Америки [4, 176]. У контексті цієї роботи ми зосередимо наш науковий інтерес на особливостях втілення образної системи, а саме міфологічних образів, автохтонного фольклору в художніх текстах амеріндіанців. Як показав аналіз антології художньої літератури американських індіанців (автобіографічні оповідання Джорджа Копвея «*Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh*» (1818–1869), Блек Елк «*Hehaka Sapa*» (1863–1950), історичні оповідання, короткі оповідання Гертруди Бонні «*Zitkala-Sa*» (1876–1938), етнографічні оповідання Чарлза Істмена «*Ohiyesa*» (1858–1939), легенди, чарівні казки Крістін Квінтаскіт «*Mourning Dove*», «*Humishuma*» (1885–1936)), наприкінці XIX ст. усні народні легенди і