Developing Students' Intercultural Competence by Social Networks

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ABSTRACT

Research studies show that achieving higher levels of language proficiency depends on thinking like a target language speaker and such thinking requires cultural understanding. Extra-linguistic issues such as values, beliefs, norms, rituals, and traditions are also key components of communication exchanges, which should be taught target culture interactively in foreign language classrooms in order to enhance intercultural competence. However, on the other hand, language learners can develop their basic understanding of cultural diversity through the use of authentic language materials unlimited access to Web tools. This article highlights the importance of developing students' intercultural competence and advantages of using social networks to interact with native speakers of the target language to improve language skills and intercultural competence.

KEYWORDS: intercultural competence, cultural awareness, social networks, web tools, foreign language.

Introduction

The process of globalization, the expansion of economic, social and cultural ties, the need to master the skills necessary for communication and doing business in a multicultural and multilingual environment have increased the significance of learning foreign languages. Learning a foreign language is one of the means of intercultural communication, a combination of various forms of relations and communication between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures. Teaching intercultural communication began to be considered not only from the standpoint of learning the language itself, but also from the culture of another country or countries.

Since intercultural communication is an adequate mutual understanding of two participants in a communicative act belonging to different national cultures, the goal of teaching foreign languages is to form communicative competence in the field of intercultural communication, the ability to communicate in a foreign language, taking into account the difference in cultures and stereotypes of thinking. Without an understanding of socio-economic systems, knowledge of social and political cultures, the study of historical

and cultural traditions that have shaped the way of thinking of people with whom one has to interact, it is impossible to master a foreign language as a means of international communication.

Materials and Methods

It is known that the structure of communicative competence consists of the following components:

Linguistic competence, which implies knowledge of vocabulary units and grammatical rules that transform lexical units into a meaningful statement;

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to choose and use adequate language forms and means, depending on the purpose and situation of communication, the social roles of communication participants;

Discursive competence, namely the ability to understand various types of communicative statements, to build coherent, coherent and logical statements of various functional styles;

Strategic competence refers to verbal and non-verbal means that a person resorts to if communication does not take place;

Socio-cultural competence is the ability and desire to interact with others, self-confidence for communication including knowledge of the cultural characteristics of native speakers, their habits, traditions, norms of behavior and etiquette, the ability to understand and adequately use them in the process of communication, while remaining a carrier of a different culture;

In the theory of intercultural communication, the concept of sociocultural competence occupies a central place. Sociocultural competence is sociocultural language knowledge adequately used in intercultural communication. When studying a foreign language, students should understand that each national language reflects the elements and phenomena characteristic of the way of life of people. The lack of sociocultural competence skills makes communication much more difficult. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use and transform linguistic forms in accordance with the situation. It provides knowledge of the semantic features of words, idiomatic expressions, and the possibility of their use. Sociolinguistic competence includes the ability to recognize linguistic features of dialects, pronunciations, depending on the place of residence, origin, occupation of individuals. The sociolinguistic component has a great influence on the linguistic design of communication between representatives of different cultures.

The process of forming these competencies is based on a model of real communication, which means not just the transfer and communication of information of a cognitive and evaluative nature, the exchange of knowledge, skills and abilities, but, above all, ensuring mutual understanding of people in the process of speech interaction. It is necessary to create an atmosphere of real communication, to use foreign languages actively in living, natural situations. These can be scientific discussions in the language with the involvement of foreign students, summarizing and discussing foreign scientific literature, reading individual courses in foreign languages, working as an interpreter, which consists in communication, the ability to understand and convey information. It is also necessary to develop extra-curricular forms of communication, for example, clubs or open lectures in foreign languages. Communicative-oriented teaching of foreign languages should take into account the features of real communication, have a speech orientation, pay attention not only to the content, but also to the form of the statement. Consequently, in the implementation of communication-oriented learning, situationality plays a huge role in the selection of material and the organization of its consolidation in relation to certain situations of communication. This will be facilitated by the use of authentic materials and truly communicative tasks.

In this regard, the development of information and communication technologies has opened up new prospects for teaching foreign languages. Their use facilitates and optimizes the learning process, helps to overcome the psychological barrier that students have when using a foreign language as a means of communication. Today, we have a number of tools that help create an atmosphere of immersion in an authentic language environment, feel a different culture and implementing the principle of language functionality.

These tools include Web services such blog, twitter, social networks, forum, wiki, audio and video casts have taken an important place in the process of learning a foreign language due to their availability in synchronous and asynchronous modes from any mobile device. Information technologies have a number of advantages in learning foreign languages:

✓ to form and develop communicative language competence, allowing students to become participants in professional communication in a foreign language, realize their professional needs and personal business contacts, carry out professional self-education and improvement;

✓ to stimulate intercultural communication;

✓ to promote an intensive exchange of knowledge;

✓ to increase the motivation of students to study;

✓ to reveal personal qualities, abilities, talents of students;

✓ to promote the development of independent work skills.

On the other hand, the use of Web tools enables the teacher to:

✓ to accelerate the process of formation of speech skills and language skills of students;

✓ to motivate students to learn foreign languages

✓ to reveal the intellectual and creative potential of students;

✓ to implement a more flexible individual approach to learning in accordance with the intellectual and speech capabilities of each student and the stage of teaching foreign languages.

Internet technologies provide many opportunities for self-development and disclosure of the creative potential of the student's personality. They allow users to work on learning material anytime, anywhere, synchronously or asynchronously with teachers and other students. Flexibility, individualization, interactivity, multimedia learning process using information technology allow teachers to combine individual and group tasks. Modern Internet technologies open wide access to educational services, making the learning process open and relatively inexpensive. Among Internet technologies related to communication and information exchange or transmission, social language networks occupy a special place, as they are a tool for live communication, direct language contact with an interlocutor who is a native speaker of another language, culture, historical tradition and a social environment.

Results and Discussions

Educational social networks for learning foreign languages have recently gained wide popularity among people of different age groups to have opportunity to communicate directly with people from other countries for free, to learn more about life, customs, habits, national character and characteristics, national cuisine, people's views on various problems of everyday life in the target language. Live online communication with

native speakers allows students to quickly remove the psychological barrier - overcome the fear of communicating in a foreign language, improve their oral and written skills, replenish vocabulary, speak the language, while saving time and money.

It should be noted that social language networks offer services designed for different categories of users, depending on the specific purpose of learning and the level of foreign language proficiency - from elementary situational communication on a tourist trip around a foreign country to fluency at the household level and professional communication. The fashion for educational social networks is growing all over the world, and in the future, such networks will only develop towards both increasing the number of participants and improving the quality of educational content, services and services offered by developers.

Livemochas.com is a social network for language learning that is position-establishes itself as a web service that connects web-based learning materials to the global online community of language learners. The main principle put by the developers as the basis for teaching foreign languages is language learning, development and improvement of language skills and abilities, the level of foreign language proficiency through joint communication and mutual assistance, in which native speakers act as expert consultants.

Busuu.com is a social network that offers free educational content, the ability to communicate with native speakers and upload texts for review. The network is aimed at people who have basic knowledge of a foreign language, but do not have enough free time to study languages due to their large professional employment. Busuu.com can rightly be called a linguistic social network, since one of its main goals is to establish intercultural communication with native speakers.

Italki.com is an educational social network aimed at the formation and development of writing skills, work with written materials - diaries, notes, catalogs, etc.

Lingq.com is an educational social network based on the polyglot Steve Kaufman method. His method of learning a foreign language is based on the following principle: first listening to the text, then reading the text, and, finally, "games" with new words - vocabulary replenishment, memorization of new words. Thanks to this sequence, the student begins to speak, write, think and communicate in a foreign language. Podcast texts are selected taking into account the degree of lexical and grammatical complexity and the level of foreign language proficiency from beginner to advanced.

Besides, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become a popular path of online learning allowing flexibility for the learners in many ways. They are free (at least the basic offering) and they can be followed from anywhere, anytime as long as language learners have connectivity (some platforms allow downloading all content into own device allowing the learning to take place off-line). Many MOOC platforms such as FutureLearn (www.futurelearn.com) allow learners to access the course materials even after a course ends allowing even more flexibility. futurelearn.com offer a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions from around the world.

Conclusion

Social educational networks for learning foreign languages are constantly being updated and improved, new services are being added, content is being replenished, the quality of teaching methods is improving, and the circle of participants is expanding. Integrating social language networks into the educational process increases students' motivation to study, form and develop linguistic communicative competence, without which it is impossible to integrate into the modern information society.

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