

# The Communicative-Ethnographic Approach in Teaching Foreign Language and Culture

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**Abstract**—The article defines and clarifies the concept of the communicative-ethnographic approach in two directions: “communicative” and “ethnographic”. The ethnographic approach allows us to consider the interaction of cultures of different ethnic groups that reside in a particular area. The implementation of this approach from the point of view of cultural studies is similar to its implementation from the point of view of sociology. The formation of communicative and intercultural competencies (foreign language) is one of the important goals of teaching a foreign language. This approach is intended of foreign language and culture under the conditions of linguistic and sociocultural environment, also, it remains one of the cultural learning approaches towards the language. Some characteristics of the communicative-ethnographic approach state about the didactic and methodological potentials of immersion in a linguistic and cultural environment with the intention to study a foreign language and culture.

**Keywords**—*communicative, ethnography, socio-cultural environment, cultural identity, ethnos, communicative competence, linguistic personality, cultural studies*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 90s of the 20th century, M. Bayram and his colleagues developed an ethnographic approach which was focused on studying the culture of the country of the studied language in immersion, meaning in the conditions of complete immersion [1].

It should be noticed that by the approach of learning we understand “the realization of the leading, dominant idea of learning in practice in the form of a specific strategy and with the help of one or another method of learning” [2].

The case method represents a methodical solution to this approach. The learning process itself consists of studying the facts of culture. Such a solution only

highlights the characteristics of culture for some specific aspects, but it doesn't give students a complete picture of the culture of the studying country's language. It seems to us impossible to consider studying a foreign language in the gap between learning a culture, meanwhile studying the facts of culture should be closely related to the social, socio-cultural and historical plan. In this regard, the provisions of the ethnographic approach should be expanded, enriched, and adjusted.

The combination of two concepts in the name of the approach indicates the importance of its two components - “communicative” and “ethnographic”. First of all, let us turn to the concept of “ethnography”. In many dictionaries, the conceptual content of this term is similar. “Ethnography” in the dictionary of the Russian language has two meanings: “1) the science that studies ethnogenesis, material and spiritual culture, especially life of some nation (nations); 2) the combination of all the features of everyday life, customs, culture of any nation, nationality, locality” [3].

The ethnographic approach allows us to consider the interaction of cultures of different ethnic groups that reside in a particular area. The implementation of this approach from the point of view of cultural studies is similar to its implementation from the point of view of sociology. The subject of study in sociology is a complex of social phenomena, which arises from the interaction of social groups, people, communities, their social roles, social connections, and social relations. Consequently, in sociology, the ethnographic approach is focused on studying the community of people (ethnos), which is based on the process of self-identification and cultural self-identification.

An interesting part in our opinion, is a doctrine of the “ethnography of communication” of an American sociolinguist, anthropologist D. Hymes [4]. His work is a reaction on the concept of N. Chomsky about “the ideal speaker - listener”, who has an innate knowledge of the grammar of the native language [5].

D. Hymes introduced the concept of “communicative competence”. According to him, “there are rules of use, without which the rules of grammar are useless.” [4]. Meaning that, knowledge of the language is in the

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possession of vocabulary, the grammatical system, as well as in the presence of certain ideas about the socio-cultural context of communication. D. Hymes proposed to assume the disparity of the linguistic competence in social contexts. This makes language change from ideal social communicative condition to realistic communicative. Ethnography in this matter is a method that allows you to study the socio-cultural context of language use.

It should be noticed that the formation of communicative and intercultural competencies (foreign language) is one of the most important goals of teaching a foreign language. It is focused on the study of a foreign language and culture in a linguistic and sociocultural environment, and it is, also, one of the cultural approaches to the language. That is why we should talk more about the communicative-ethnographic approach.

A distinctive feature of this approach from cultural approaches is a liaison with representatives of the language and socio-cultural environment, and penetration into this environment, as well as the creation of didactic conditions for the formation of students' intercultural competence in a full scope. Foreign students in such an environment act as ethnographers: they observe communication, behavior of country's representatives of the language being studied, and study the culture of this country and its language. But here it is important to make a clarification: it is necessary to study not one ethnos living in a given territory, but several nations, their interaction, mutual influence on each other.

Another distinctive feature of the communicative-ethnographic approach from other cultural approaches is that this approach prepares the conditions for the formation and development of the intercultural competence of students in large volumes. Cultural approaches are aimed at learning a language outside the language environment and would not be able to give such a volume.

Many researchers have taken a great attention to intercultural competence. With regard to learning a foreign language, several models of intercultural competence have arisen. M. Bayram was the first to introduce one of the models of intercultural competence, and he proposed to include five main components: relations; knowledge; interpretation skills; skills of mastering information and interaction; critical cultural awareness / political education [1].

This model is very popular in the West, however, despite this it causes a lot of controversy among researchers: 1) it's provided not unique, but universal components of interaction between cultures and their representatives; 2) the boundaries of the component composition of this model are blurred, which negatively affects both theory and practice; 3) there is no clear idea about intercultural competence and its framework. Nevertheless, the model proposed by M. Bayram made the researchers pay attention to the problems of intercultural competence, as well as continue to develop in the field of intercultural communication [1].

A model that combines communicative and intercultural competence and which is worth paying attention to is the model of K. Kramsh, which describes the intercultural element of foreign language communication [6]. K. Kramsh proposed the notion of "intercultural speaking", criticizing many existing models. This term was supposed to meet two competencies - foreign language communicative and intercultural. "Intercultural speaking" is an intermediary between two cultures, preserving linguistic, cultural, social identity. He should know the culture of his country and the culture of the country of the language being studied, not imitate the "native speaker" in communicative behavior.

K. Kramsh to attract the attention of researchers to the problem of learning language and culture, moreover, hesitating that many aspects of communication were infringed, since much attention was paid in the methodology of striving to attain the ideal knowledge of a foreign language.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the cross-cultural foreign language teaching modes in the multicultural environment from the communicative-ethnographic approach to improve students' intercultural communicative competence

## II. METHODS

The main research methods of this paper are: historical method, comparative method and descriptive. The importance of learning foreign languages was the work of V.G. Apalkov [7]. In his work, the researcher talks about the component composition of intercultural competence, showing its distinctive elements. V.G. Apalkov changed the traditional structure of intercultural competence, which included knowledge, attitudes, and skills. From his point of view, this component should include information about the interaction of different cultures among themselves through their own representatives but exclude information about the culture of the country of the language being studied or the language directly studied. V.G. Apalkov's model became the basis for mastering intercultural competence among students of the secondary school.

Thus, a special place in the structure of communicative competence takes the intercultural competence. It helps students adapt to a new foreign language culture, under such conditions a linguistic personality normally shapes, that is able to change independently in another culture.

In order to consider the methodological idea of the communicative-ethnographic approach, it is necessary to turn to the main methods of ethnography and the types of problematic cultural tasks in language classes. Main ethnographic methods:

Observation is a method that immerses students in a real socio-cultural and linguistic environment. Students take active part in society's life, observing the behavior of communicants, and also collect the necessary information on this issue, analyze the collected material and make

conclusions.

Questioning is a method that can be conducted both in person and in absentia. The aspect of language and culture that interests students most of all is selected, questions on this aspect are compiled, and carriers answer to questions raised. Further following the analysis of data that are classified according to certain criteria, then obtained information is summarized and explained.

Survey is a method of the ethnographic approach, which, like the survey, can be conducted both in person and in absentia. This method collects the necessary information, classifies it, analyzes and interprets as well. Respondents ask after how students create questions at the most interesting sections of language and culture.

- Interview - from the point of view of language training, the most difficult of all the above methods, as there will be a personal conversation with native speakers and culture. Students make questions, then talk with speakers about the language and culture, then make the appropriate conclusions.

### III. RESULTS

Thus, the choice of method depends on the level of language acquisition, on the age of students, on their cognitive abilities, as well as, on the degree of proficiency in one or more competencies. Together with the ethnography methods listed above, it is necessary to pay attention to the types of cultural tasks.

Projects, presentations and problem tasks must be conducted through four methods of the ethnographic approach during extra-curricular time.

The preparation for the use of ethnographic methods (observation, questioning, polling, interviews) should be carried out at seminars, lectures and research areas. Students who live in the country of the studying language being studied should pay great attention to the methods of the ethnographic approach. The preparation and implementation of these methods in practice can be undertaken both in the home country and in the country whose language and culture is being studied.

Here the timing and the training program are important. Using four methods of ethnography at the final levels, students with a teacher should be able to analyze the information received, but rather than to create incorrect judgments about the representatives of the country of the language being studied and their culture, moreover, to have a general idea about the cultural aspect of a studied aspect, as well as about the relationship with other aspects within the cultural, social or historical contexts.

At the implementation stage of the communicative-ethnographic approach, the role of the teacher is to develop the actions aimed at organizing group work. In the implementation of ethnographic projects, the role of the teacher is reduced to the observation of the educational and

cognitive activity of students. Monitoring can be carried out by the teacher personally or perhaps with the help of tutors a remote manner, when students prepare a progress report or need advice from a teacher.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The communicative-ethnographic approach has several characteristics. These characteristics are very important for creating immersion language and culture training materials, as well as for internship programs. These characteristics include: individualization and differentiation of education; conditions of immersion; ethnographic methods; contextual learning; communicative learning; socio-cultural education; multicultural education [8].

The above characteristics of the communicative-ethnographic approach state of the didactic and methodological potential of immersion in the linguistic and cultural environment to the purpose of studying a foreign language and culture, as well as the differences from other cultural approaches.

Based on the characteristics of the communicative-ethnographic approach, it is necessary to highlight a few key points of this approach regarding teaching foreign language and culture.

The first position: the communicative-ethnographic approach is one of cultural studies approaches of teaching a foreign language and culture, which introduces students to the language and cultural (sociocultural) environment country where the language is studying, additionally, it forms intercultural and communicative competences. It is associated with several approaches: systemic, cognitive-communicative, competence-based, socio-cultural, personal-activity approaches.

The second position: the communicative-ethnographic approach provides a systematic study of language facts and cultural realities. Students typically learn language and cultural realities through the synchronic or diachronic aspects.

The third position: in the selection of the content of training are involved the following:

- The principle of didactic culture;
- The principle of dialogue of cultures [9];
- The principle of cultural variability [8];
- The principle of cultural opposition [7].

The fourth position: the methodological dominant of the communicative ethnographic approach is observation, questioning, interviewing (ethnographic methods). There are four methods of ethnography along with three types of cultural studies (search and play cultural studies, educational and research cultural studies, educational research and cultural studies) which formulate intercultural and communicative competences, as well as they enrich students' linguistic and cultural practices.

The fifth position: due to the implementation of the communicative-ethnographic approach the independent work of students plays a vital role.

Sixth position: reflection is an important stage in the implementation of the communicative ethnographic approach. With its help we can compare the aspects of the language and culture of a “foreign” country with the aspects of the language and culture of the native country, which leads to the adaptation of linguistic, cultural diversity of the language environment, as well as the discovery advantages and disadvantages of students' cognitive activity using ethnographic methods and cultural tasks.

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