

## VALIDATING CULTURAL IDENTITY: COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO EFL TEACHING

### INTRODUCTION

The debate over whether to use or not to use the learners' native language (L1) inside the classroom has always been the topic of discussion for the reason of its being considered a serious obstacle in building a bridge in cross-cultural learning. The ban on the native language in the classroom was imposed until 1990-s being promoted as the best way to foster the foreign language (L2) acquisition. A reasonable combination of L1 and L2 ensures the unity of actualizing such functions of the studied language as communicative, cultural and pragmatic; orientation of the learning process to ensure a dialogue of cultures based on comprehensive consideration of the interrelationships between language, thinking, and culture. Auerbach believes that L1 "provides a sense of learners' security, allowing them to express themselves freely. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English" [Auerbach 1993: 19]. In sociocultural theory [Lantolf 2000; Vygotsky 1978, 1986] L1 is understood as one of the beneficial cognitive tools to be employed in the process of teaching a student as a cultural agent constructing knowledge within unique local environments.

### Methodology

Suggested methods include cross-cultural tools and techniques for encouraging students to identify and develop conceptual links between L1 and L2 vocabulary "in order not to make them feel their identity threatened" [Hopk18]. The main idea of such an approach is that integrating contrastive strategies of using L1 minimally and with a clear purpose into the EFL classroom can contribute to teaching and building rapport, which eases apprehension and breaks down barriers. The main idea that lies behind teaching EFL in particular contexts is based on the stance that every learner-teacher relationship is unique, and every context is unique [Brown 2000]. Considering that social practice theories prove that misunderstanding in intercultural communication often occurs due to the lack of cultural diversity knowledge we believe that in order to interpret the idea expressed in a foreign language one should get an insight into the native speakers' vision of the world, their mindset. Thus, Ufimtseva reveals that self-image and the language consciousness of Russians is different with the English and Russian speakers. The author pays attention primarily to the lexicalized content of consciousness of Russians on lexical associations. In her article *Ethnic character, Self-Image and Linguistic Consciousness of Russians* the author reveals the contrast between associations caused by stimuli between the English and the Russian native speakers. The analysis shows that the images of the world of Russians and English speakers differ significantly primarily in their consistency [Ufimtseva 1998]. For example, the first place in the English associative range is taken by the word 'me', whereas in the Russian associative mentality it is obviously not at the top. The Russian mentality is represented by the word 'man', which displays the tendency of the Russian speakers to think big, generalize through global statements of a declarative character. The English speakers being more egocentric seem to be more specific, precise and laconic.

### RESULTS

With cultural practices in L2 that are foreign in L1, sometimes explanation can take a tremendous amount of time. Incorporating L1 can be helpful and relieve tension which is sure to arise while studying foreign concepts.

For example, the English idiomatic comparison "*as drunk as a lord*" is difficult for acquisition for a Russian student because the word 'lord' has a positive connotation while analogical expression in Russian has a negative connotation "*as drunk as a shoemaker/swine*".

But idiomatic and phraseological units reflect the cultural specifics of the language and play an important role in intercultural communication. Their understanding greatly facilitates the perception of modern journalistic and artistic works. However, it is often impossible to understand L2 phraseological meaning without searching for its analogue in the students' L1. For example, the expression "*don't haloo till you out of the wood*" in Russian has nothing to do with the 'wood', but sounds as "*не говори гоп, пока не перепрыгнешь.*"

Another category of words, hardly understood without translation, are pseudo-international words, or the so-called "false friends of the translator". It is quite difficult and time-consuming to explain to students that 'complexion' is not 'комплексия', but 'цвет лица', and 'комплексия' will be 'body shape'; that 'decade' is 'ten years' for the English speaker, and 'декада' is only 'ten days' for the Russian speaker; that English 'angina' is 'стенокардия', and Russian 'ангина' is 'tonsillitis' in English, although both originate from Latin.

### Conclusion

Using L1 has no risk of preventing students' effort to find the meaning from explanations or contexts. Vice versa, it facilitates critical thinking through comparative analysis of concepts given in L1 and L2.

### REFERENCES

1. Выготский Л. С. Мышление и речь. – М: Директ Медиа, 2014. 362 с. [Vygotsky, L. S. 2014. Myshlenie i Rech (Thinking and speech). Monograph. Moscow: Direct-Media].
2. Уфимцева Н. В. Этнический характер, образ себя и языковое сознание русских //Языковое сознание: формирование и функционирование, 1998. С. 135—170. [Ufimtseva, N. V. 1988. Etnicheskiy kharakter, obraz sebya i yazykovoe soznanie russkih (Ethnic Character, Self-Image and Linguistic Consciousness of Russians). In: *Yazykovoe soznanie: formirovanie i funktsionirovanie (Linguistic Consciousness: Formation and Functioning)*. Moscow, 135—170].
3. Auerbach E. R. 1993. Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom //TESOL quarterly. V. 27 (1), 9—32.
4. Brown H. D. et al. 2000. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. New York: Longman. V. 4.