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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Intercultural competence development is one of the key aspects which should be considered in improving English language acquisition. Researchers state that that challenges of the twenty first century move second/foreign language instruction towards a more cultural focus [4, p. 31]. It is a well-known fact that there are a great number of works relating to intercultural competence development (for instance see one of numerous works of Michael Byram [2]), but the state of things shows that there is neither a specially designed academic course nor textbooks which would cover the main aspects of developing intercultural competence of English language teachers whose first language is Ukrainian. In fact, similar tendency can be observed even in the USA. Thus, according to Elisabeth Arevalo-Guerrero intercultural communication courses in the US are mainly found in ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs, not in general teacher education programs. Unfortunately, the field of foreign language teaching has not seen this as crucial training for their undergraduate or graduate programs. Therefore, teachers of foreign languages are urged to complement their pedagogical training with professional development courses, workshops, and conferences that focus on the development of intercultural communication competence in language teaching [1, p. 358].

It means that there is a great need in an academic course which would be aimed at, on the one hand, further developing personal intercultural competence of prospective teachers, and, on the other hand, providing necessary tools of singling out essential cultural information, as well as methodological ways and means of developing intercultural competence of students.

The theoretical part of the course could cover the main aspects of intercultural communication competence of prospective teachers of English as a second language. The work would dwell on the meaning of the concept of intercultural communication competence, its content, and significance. Moreover, attention should be paid to role of international communication skills in second language acquisition, issues concerning English language teaching in the context of language culture nexus, including the influence of culture on the language, its vocabulary, grammar, communication patterns, and their significance for successful second language acquisition. Finally, it will analyse existing EU approaches to teaching English as a second language via intercultural communication skills development from the point of view of their application at Ukrainian teacher training universities.

The methodological part of the course should cover main aspects of application and implementation of developing an international communication skills approach into English language teacher training practice. We entirely agree with Iskra Georgieva who states that “it is more important to concentrate on skills than knowledge and on encouraging learners to analyse the familiar cultural world around them as a basis for intercultural comparison and reflection” [3, p. 77]. Firstly, the emphasis is to be paid on working out universal principles of training teachers of English as a second language with special regard to international communication competence development. Secondly, it should deal with main specific points for teaching students whose first language is Ukrainian. Finally, there is a necessity to concentrate on main aspects of figuring out social and cultural information necessary for intercultural communication, ways of defining social and culture-specific information, means and techniques of evaluating authentic educational materials from the point of view of international communication skills development etc.

Thus, the outcomes of the project and the proposed academic course may contribute to advances in the English as a second language teacher training process at higher English teacher training educational establishments in Ukraine. Moreover, a well-elaborated international communication competence course would be successful

both in formal and informal foreign language teacher professional development programmes.

REFERENCES

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