# Teaching History of the English Language: Some Socio-Cultural Aspects and Features of Competence-Based Approach

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## Abstract

The importance of the problem under investigation is determined by the increasing importance of learning English, which sometimes raises a number of linguistic, cultural and pedagogical issues that can be linked with students' understanding of the English language itself. The purpose of the article is to reveal some historicocultural aspects of language teaching, which include acquisition of knowledge, shaping skills needed for cross-cultural communication; as well as to highlight the most important features to ensure competence-based approach. The leading approach to the study of the problem is systematic, involving basic content of teaching the history of the English language, which represents a merger of two distinct-subdisciplines of linguistics: sociolinguistics and culturology and focusing on cognitive and communicative components of linguoculturological competence. The paper presents an overview that any foreign language should be viewed not only as a system of linguistic norms, but also as a system of social norms and behavior, spiritual values; language is central to historical and social interaction in every society. The materials of this paper can be recommended for use in modern practice of educational institutions, as well as in the system of teacher training.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural communication, acquisition of knowledge, sociolinguistics and culturology, competence-based approach

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Importance of the Problem

In modern studies on methods of teaching English language an increasing attention is focused on the relation between language, history and culture. The acknowledgement of the importance of the socio-cultural component in research is closely connected with the usage of cognitive approach.

The recent rapid pace of globalization and significant changes in different connections that exist between nations and people have again emphasized the importance of learning English.

Undoubtedly, modern society has become increasingly aware that knowledge of foreign language and culture of the country of the language gives indispensible advantages: more chances to be integrated in a rapidly changing society with a market economy, to be better employed, to study the culture of other nations to the utmost, to conceive the global problems. Practical foreign language fluency began to be perceived as a significant achievement of an individual. Cross-cultural communicative competence gains importance for young people as a means of interaction between people, a way of communication processes and internationalization of achievements in culture, science, economy and technology, a means of introduction to the national culture which significantly affects the cultural and educational level of an individual and his/her values. Under the internationalization of world labor market cross-cultural communicative competence of Russian students adds to the prestige of the vocational training received, and language resources enhance the competitiveness of native specialists and expand their professional and socio-cultural horizons (Grigoryeva, 2015; Zakirova, 2015; Solovyeva, 2015; Balashova, 2015; Garayeva, 2015).

One of the most important aims of Kazan Federal University is to prepare linguistically competent specialists who will be able to socialize in multicultural communities and apply their knowledge in different spheres of life. Competence-based approach to education today is one of the significant issues. A variety of key competences (linguistic, social, cultural, communicative) is essential for everyone, which will ensure the successful adaption

and self-realization of a young specialist in the modern fast changing world.

The current trends in the national education (integration, globalization, internationalization, regionalization, democratization, diversification, humanization, informatization) lead to the necessity to understand education as a continuous process, and not as a rigid structure. Directions for an educational organization development meet the requirements of society to the effectiveness and quality of educational activities in high dynamics of external and internal environment (Levina, 2015; Kamasheva, 2015; Gazizova, 2015; Garayeva, 2015).

It is quite evident that many graduates of universities demonstrate not appropriable level of the English language and even those who are knowledgeable enough cannot use effectively the language in their professional communication.

The dynamic development of the information society stipulates that the professional activities of modern young professional require continuous education, commitment to continuous improvement of his professional competence.

Therefore, during training, the student should not only form the subject knowledge and skills, but also promote the development of those personal qualities that would enable in future to solve new problems (Sibgatova, 2015).

Sometimes students fail to comment upon some linguistic phenomena, because they are not aware of linguocultural aspects of the English language, customs, traditions and ways of life of different nations. It has long been recognized that any living language develops together with the speech community, that is, with the people who speak it.

Language is central to historical and social interaction in every society, regardless of location and time period. Presumably the history of the English language is one of the major subjects while learning English.

*1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem*

Linguoculturology is a new branch of science, which deals with manifestations of culture of different nations ,which became fixed and are reflected in the language. The great upsurge of interest in culturology and its actual rise from the state of amateur speculation to a serious science date from the late 20th century. Researches in this field use sociolinguistic methods to explain various language phenomena. This approach is particularly useful when language internal data alone is unable to account for some seemingly inexplicable facts. Byram thinks that when people are talking to each other their social identities are unavoidably part of the social interaction between them. In language teaching the concept of "communicative competence" takes this into account by emphasizing that language learners need to acquire not just grammatical competence but also the knowledge of what is "appropriate" language. (Byram, 2002).

Currently, the problem of students' information competence formation is becoming increasingly important from both science and practice. To date, a large number of technologies and teaching techniques based on efficient approaches to knowledge transferring to students, his cognitive abilities' development are developed and implemented (Garayeva, 2015; Kartashova, 2015).

Culturological approach in teaching English focuses on the semantic concept. Through this angle the process of learning the English language implies not only traditional study of phonetics, grammar, vocabulary but also the English language mastering through its national concepts .This enables the learners to acquire an interrelated ethnocultural knowledge of language, culture and history resulting in formation of linguocultural competence, which is a set of special skills necessary to use in practice. Mainly it is defined as ability to do what is needed. It means that a student should be able to develop an ability to recognize and connect a semantic content of a language symbol with associative motivation of choice of a word .In a number of works the concept "competency "is defined as intellectual and personal ability of an individual to practical activities, and "competence" as a content's component of the given ability in the form of knowledge, skills and aptitudes (Zimnyaya,2003) In her opinion competency always displays the actual competence (Zimnyaya, 2003).

This approach has to deal with lots of issues related to the language, such as the role of culture in formation of linguistic concepts, connection between the linguistic symbol and cultural sense of the word. It is essential to identify cultural semantics which can be obtained from the interaction of two different fields -language and culture. Language and culture interactions have a reciprocal relationship: language shapes cultural interactions and cultural interactions shape language. It should be noted that the relationship of language to culture involves many difficult and contradictory problems. One problem may occur when cultural information of linguistic items mainly acquires some implication ,which is hidden. A well known expression "French leave "means 'leave or absence without permission '.Originally it was used as a term describing a custom ,prevalent in France in the 18th century but regarded in England as impolite ,of leaving a social function without saying farewell to one's

host or hostess. It is now used of any unauthorized absence or departure, from one's place of work. From this example it is evident that only knowing the origin of the linguistic item students will be able to fully understand the meaning of it and use it in the language properly. Moreover sometimes the meanings of some words can change in course of time.

Not only language and culture, but also language and history are undivided. The evolution of language includes many facts which pertain to the functioning of language in the speech community. The most widely accepted classification of factors relevant to language divides them into extra linguistic and linguistic. Strictly speaking, the term "extra-linguistic" embraces a variety of conditions bearing upon different aspects of human life, for instance, the psychological or the physiological aspects. In the first place, however, extralinguistic factors include events in the history of the people relevant to the development of the language, such as the structure of society, expansion over geographical areas, migrations, mixtures and separation of tribes, political and economic unity or disunity, contacts with other people, the progress of culture and literature. All these aspects of external history determine the linguistic situation and affect the evolution of the language. In the fifth and sixth centuries the Germanic invaders came and settled in Britain from the north-western coastline of continental Europe. As well as any other notable historic event the Anglo-Saxon migrations could not but leave their linguistic reflection on the language. At the time of the conquest the Anglo-Saxons were still pagans .Linguistic evidence of Anglo-Saxon paganism is provided by names of legendary heroes ,Anglo-Saxon kings and chieftains ,poets of the past .It was a custom with the pagans to give men names of animals ,trees and other objects of nature .Such are the names Hengiest and Horsa (both mean "horse"), Ethelstan (precious stone),Cynewulf (leader of wolves ). So knowledge of history, culture and way of life of people can throw light on some linguistic units.

*1.3 Status of a Problem*

The aim of this course is to give students a clear understanding of the changes that have taken place in the English language throughout its development, and to assist them in developing appropriate scientific approach to language. Language - is a social phenomenon. Consequently, the development of language is a natural process as it is characteristic of every social phenomenon. But any social phenomenon is developing according to certain laws. Language, as a special social phenomenon also develops according to certain laws that are unique to the language and are called the internal laws of language development. To understand the current state of language and its grammatical forms, its phonetic system, the structure of its vocabulary, it is necessary to consider each language as a result of a long historical development, which is caused by a number of changes and transformations that have taken place within a more or less long periods of time.

Thus, only a historical approach to the phenomena of the modern language can provide students with proper understanding and use. The understanding of the laws of the development of language, the ability to explain some facts knowing the history of the language and history of the people will contribute to scientific understanding of the rules of modern English language. That is why the history of the English language course is of great importance for students. The main tasks of this course are:

· to uncover laws governing the development of language as a specific system, ie such development is carried out in which the full development and interdependence of individual elements of the structure of language - phonetic, grammatical and lexical;

· to consider the relationship that exists between the history of the English people and the history of the English language. This relationship can be seen most clearly in various facts of development of the vocabulary of the English language;

· to develop the students' ability to observe certain linguistic phenomena and to establish historical links between them. It is important for students as in their future activities they must be able to scientifically justify a particular linguistic phenomenon and explain it properly;

· to introduce students to certain factual material on the history of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary of the English language that will provide the basis for the development of the scientific outlook on the evolution of the language.

Tracing the history of the English language in different periods, using the actual material students make sure that language is the product of a number of different periods of its development. That modern English is the result of a long and gradual development of linguistic phenomena of the previous centuries. It is particularly important because is that many of the phenomena that seem "deviations" or "wrong" in terms of the language, can actually represent the remnants of ancient laws and can be explained historically. For example, such phenomena of modern English as "wrong" plurals type man-men, foot-feet, so-called non-standard forms of verbs and much

more, can be explained scientifically, and, therefore, be understood only by means of knowledge of the history of English language, which, therefore, is key to understanding the structure of a modern language.

*1.4 Basic Principles of Competence – Based Approach*

The concept of competence-based approach can be defined as the ability and willingness to adequate understanding and interaction with the representatives of other linguocultural societies based on the acquisition of knowledge about the world, reflected in terms of language and it forms the foundation of cognitive communication.

Linguoculturological competence is one of the basic components of communicative competence, the formation of which is the main goal of teaching foreign languages at the present stage. The content of the linguoculturological competence includes cognitive and communicative components. A set of these components ensures major activities of this model which is aimed at achieving a final goal resulting in information of the level of competence which will enable students to interact in the multicultural society. The model of lingoculturological competence contains interconnected components aimed at achieving the final result.

The purpose of training students in universities is to prepare a competent professional, competitive in the labor market and in building a successful career. On the other hand, every sphere of professional activity wants to get a specialist - graduates who have mastered the basics of corporate culture industry, as it allows them to quickly turn it into work and the adaptation period is significantly reduced.

Corporate culture - a system of norms and values inherent in the organization's staff, interacting with each other, reflecting their personality and sense of self-esteem and respect of others in social and real environment. Corporate culture exists and develops through the culture of each individual member of the corporate community. In connection with it this model was developed for the process of forming linguoculturological competence of future specialists in the study while studying the history of the English language. Under this model mentally organized or financially implemented system is understood. The essence of the system approach is to consider the process of formation of linguoculturological competence as a complete system consisting of interconnected elements (components), organized in a certain structure.

Corporate culture of the university as an environment of students linguoculturological competence must be considered as a system consisting of elements: purpose (mission, goals and objectives); means, including: technology, style activity, control, information management; achieve the objective criteria and evaluation results; means of internal integration: techniques include new students, the language, the method of distribution of power, style, relationships, the system of rewards and punishments, etc.

Moreover, by considering the internal structure of linguoculturological competence should be also based on a systematic approach. Linguoculturological competence of students is formed in interaction with material and spiritual values of the linguistic culture of the university in real situations of communication with different representatives. Efficiency of the process of formation linguoculturological competence of studying the history of the English language in universities depends on purposeful creation of the cultural and educational environment for self-determination, self-development and self-realization.

## 2. Methodological Framework

Preparing this article for comprehensive analysis a set of basic methodological principles and ideas has been used. The main focus was made on the close interaction between the language, history, culture and society. Language scholars agree on the importance of culture in language classrooms and it has become one of the main research areas in foreign language study and teaching (Lange, 2011) The relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. The implications of language being completely entwined in culture, in regards for language teaching and language policy are far reaching, language policy must be used to create awareness and understandings of cultural differences, and written to incorporate the cultural values of those being taught (Leveridge, 2008). The paper discloses the importance that teachers must instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage. If one teaches language without teaching about the culture in which it operates, the students are learning empty or meaningless symbols or they may attach the incorrect meaning to what is being taught. The students, when using the learnt language, may use the language inappropriately or within they wrong cultural context, thus defeating the purpose of learning a language (Leveridge, 2008).

## 3. Results

Integration processes in the modern global economic and cultural space, highlight the intercultural communication as the most important factor of integration of human society. In many regions of the Russian

Federation, the problem of creating the conditions for teaching intercultural communication, enhances motivation to learn a foreign language and the development of students' linguoculturological competence acquires special importance. In these circumstances the importance of learning the history of the English language is becoming more important.

The course of the "History of the English Language" is aimed at the realization by students of their own national or social origin, place and role of national culture, the history of the target language, traditions and customs, and spiritual values of the people in the world cultural treasure, the ability to represent their country. Special course is aimed at educating of humanistic values, it involves students into linguocultural studies and research. This course provides students with the ability to express their views in writing and orally in a foreign language, understand and discuss features of culture, socio-economic life of the target language, to conduct exploratory work, prepare an oral report on a selected topic. Foreign language as a subject accumulates the most complete history and common cultural values of humanity, systematically transmits them to students. It helps to create a real opportunity for familiarizing students with universal spiritual and moral values, world and national culture for understanding the problems and realities of the modern world; contributes to the formation of national identity, citizenship, humanism, tolerance, respect for national and world culture.

The proposed course is designed as the main subject of the course "History of the English language." It is aimed at improving communicative and cognitive skills, organizing and deepening knowledge about a country. One of the methods for the development of linguoculturological competence in this course is the method of projects. It allows to provide an active and independent teaching and research activities of students in the study of the subject "History of the English Language". It provides them not only with the knowledge and skills necessary for solutions of various problems, but also it formulates their attitude toward the social and cultural aspects.

The following materials were selected for the organization of project work. They involve their theoretical and practical knowledge.

Samples of projects:

1. Geographical place names of England (origin, semantic meaning, structural components)

2. Invasions (time of the invasion, influence on the language)

3. Kings and Queens of England (period of reign, impact on the country, their nicknames)

4. Grimm's law (essence, manifestation)

5. Important events (time, influence on the country and the language)

Work on the project is carried out at different stages. At each stage, certain tasks are solved, if necessary a teacher monitors their activities. It enables to create research atmosphere where every student is involved in an active creative cognitive process based on cooperation. Thus, the study of this course allows students to discover the essence, the meaning, the purpose of forming linguoculturological competence. Basically it is seen as a way of action in a variety of situations that arise in the communication between people, between different social groups, representatives of different cultures. It can be noticed that the involvement of students in research promotes the development of critical, analytical and creative thinking. Doing experimental work promotes formation of intercultural communicative competence, communication culture. Diagnostic tests were used to trace the effectiveness of experimental work on the formation of experimental linguoculturological competence of students.

The results of the diagnostic tests of the experiment revealed the following dynamics:

· students master their own cultural values and culture study;

· students assess norms of interpersonal communication;

· students do practical actions in terms of intercultural communication.

Results of the study suggest the following conclusions:

1. Problem of intercultural learning in modern educational process in the field of learning English language history becomes one of the highest priorities of values and goals of education.

2. Linguoculturological competence is formed on the basis of more than two languages and cultures: native and non-native. The study of national culture is a basis for the formation of linguoculturological competence.

3. Psychological and pedagogical conditions of formation of linguoculturological competence of students are based on the principles of student-centered pedagogy.

4. Knowledge of language has significant educational force to influence the formation of linguoculturological competence.

## 4. Discussions

Modern pedagogics has accumulated the necessary complex of knowledge which can be a prerequisite for the solution of the research problem (Grigoryeva, 2015). Any foreign language should be viewed and taught as a system of various historical, cultural, social and human factors.

Competence-based approach to education today is one of the significant issues. A variety of key competences (linguistic, social, cultural, communicative) is essential for everyone, which will ensure the successful adaption and self-realization of a young specialist in the modern fast changing world.

Linguoculturology is aimed at scrutinizing linguistic units in connection with historical and social development of the country at different periods and thus ensures general broad comprehension of the language as a complex system.

However the study and theoretical analysis show that the problem of designing and implementing the language teaching content dealing with the history of the English language is an understudied field of scientific knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

In accordance with the results of the project the necessity to change requirements for students can be traced.

Culture is seen as an essential characteristic of a person associated with the human capacity. Communication is an essential part of human life, and therefore part of the culture. Under cross-cultural competence, we understand the student's psychological readiness to communicate (interest, motive, lack of fear of the language barrier) and a certain level of verbal skills, language material, and most importantly - the necessary amount of sociocultural knowledge of the spoken language. The main areas of competence are cognitive, pragmatic and motivational. Cognitive goal is to obtain information about other cultures, and the need to refer not only to the culture of the country of the target language but also the culture of other countries.

Pragmatic purpose involves the acquisition of practical skills necessary for intercultural communication. Motivational terms are connected with the formation of the attitude of the student, which involves tolerance and respect for other cultures, eliminate prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. The experimental model includes many elements: study material, built on the integration of national and regional courses and culture study, educational technology and student-centered model.

## 6. Recommendations

The materials of this article can be recommended for use in modern practice of higher institutions as well as in the system of teacher training.

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