DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES AT THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

DESENVOLVIMENTO DE COMPETÊNCIA INTERCULTURAL EM AULAS DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA NA UNIVERSIDADE DE MEDICINA

DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA INTERCULTURAL EN CLASES DE LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN LA UNIVERSIDAD MÉDICA

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ABSTRACT: This article describes the experience of using the project method in foreign language classes at the medical university. Using the example of the implementation of the project "Medical Education and Healthcare Abroad", the development of intercultural competence and its role in teaching a foreign language are examined. The features of the development of intercultural competence at the non-linguistic university are noted. The participation of an expert (teacher of the Department of Public Health and Healthcare) gives this project an interdisciplinary character, and also increases students' motivation. This project allows to work on four aspects described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): listening, reading, writing and speaking. The use of self-assessment and peer assessment helps to develop critical thinking and allows students to improve their own projects. This project can be implemented in groups where students master a foreign language at different levels.

KEYWORDS: Language for specific purposes. Intercultural competence. Medical university. Foreign language. Project method.

RESUMO: Este artigo descreve a experiência de utilização do método de projeto em aulas de língua estrangeira na faculdade de medicina. A partir do exemplo da implementação do projeto "Educação Médica e Saúde no Exterior", examina-se o desenvolvimento da competência intercultural e seu papel no ensino de uma língua estrangeira. As características do desenvolvimento da competência intercultural na universidade não linguística são notadas. A participação de um especialista (professor do Departamento de Saúde Pública e Saúde) confere a este projeto um caráter interdisciplinar, além de aumentar a motivação dos alunos. Este projeto permite trabalhar quatro aspectos descritos no Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para Línguas (CEFR): ouvir, ler, escrever e falar. O uso de autoavaliação e avaliação por pares ajuda a desenvolver o pensamento crítico e permite que os alunos melhorem seus próprios projetos. Este projeto pode ser implementado em grupos onde os alunos dominam uma língua estrangeira em diferentes níveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Linguagem para fins específicos. Competência intercultural. Universidade médica. Lingua estrangeira. Método de projeto.

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RESUMEN: *Este artículo describe la experiencia de utilizar el método de proyectos en las clases de lengua extranjera en la universidad de medicina. Usando el ejemplo de la implementación del proyecto "Educación médica y atención médica en el extranjero", se examina el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural y su papel en la enseñanza de un idioma extranjero. Se señalan las características del desarrollo de la competencia intercultural en la universidad no lingüística. La participación de un experto (profesor del Departamento de Salud Pública y Sanidad) da a este proyecto un carácter interdisciplinar, además de aumentar la motivación de los alumnos. Este proyecto permite trabajar cuatro aspectos descritos en el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER): escuchar, leer, escribir y hablar. El uso de la autoevaluación y la evaluación por pares ayuda a desarrollar el pensamiento crítico y permite a los estudiantes mejorar sus propios proyectos. Este proyecto se puede implementar en grupos donde los estudiantes dominan un idioma extranjero en diferentes niveles.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Lenguaje para fines específicos. Competencia intercultural. Universidad medica. Idioma extranjero. Método de proyecto.*

Introduction

It is impossible to learn a foreign language without a cultural context. It is no coincidence that the Federal State standard provides for the development of universal competencies that are usually reserved for the subject "Foreign language": able to use modern communication technologies, including in foreign language for academic and professional communication; able to analyze and take into account the diversity of cultures in the process of intercultural interaction. As Porcher notes, the language [...] and culture [...] are always interconnected in the process of communication. Separating them from each other is more than pedagogical absurdity: violation of ethics, lack of knowledge and respect for others (PORCHER, 1996, p. 250). There are two types of cultures: the culture of civilization (literature, music, painting, etc.) (PORCHER, 2004, p. 54.) and general or popular culture (lifestyle and behavior) (GALISSON, 1991). Obviously, when we talk about the cultural and intercultural component in the framework of a foreign language for specific purposes course, we mean the general culture, "we do not ask a foreign resuscitator, even if it always flatters the French soul, to quote Victor Hugo by heart, in the intensive care unit. He/she must catch, take a hint and be effective professionally" (XU; YANN, 2008, p. 97). This article describes the experience of implementing the project "Medical Education and Healthcare Abroad". By getting acquainted with this topic, students can not only "express their thoughts and understand messages in a foreign language" (CUQ; GRUCA, 2003, p. 84) but also compare the healthcare system and the organization of medical education in Russia and in the target-

language countries. Working on this project allows to draw attention to another culture, develop tolerance, and acceptance of culture in the target-language country.

Cultural elements are common evidence, they are rarely explicit, so they are not seen or heard directly. However, they play an important role in the organization of processes and in relations between people, both in terms of behavior and language (MANGIANTE; PARPETTE, 2004, p. 23). McKay emphasizes the importance of the cultural component, since students studying a foreign language for specific purposes should be aware of the culture associated with a specific discourse that corresponds to their learning profile and the goal they need to achieve when using the language (MCKAY, 2002).

In the context of teaching a foreign language for specific purposes, many researchers note the importance of culture and the need to develop intercultural competence among students (LINDNER, 2010; TANG, 2014; ZORANYAN, 2008). In particular, Luka argues that intercultural competence is an integral element in teaching a foreign language for specific purposes along with communicative competence (LUKA, 2007, p. 7). R. Clouet emphasizes the role of the intercultural component within the scientific community, where English is often used as lingua franca, and notes that it is important to develop an "intercultural sensitivity" that promotes understanding of values and ways of acting, interacting, and solving problems (CLOUET, 2017). R. Clouet advocates a pragmatic approach, which is focused on intercultural sensitivity (to facilitate understanding of values and ways of acting, interaction, and problem solving) and flexibility (to adapt to cultural differences) in order to contribute to the development of intercultural competence within the framework of academic interaction.

Methods

Intercultural competence is defined as a set of abilities necessary for effective and proper functioning when interacting with other people who differ from us in linguistic and cultural terms (FANTINI; TIRMIZI, 2007, p. 12). In general, intercultural competence is most often associated with learning a foreign language, since learning communication in a foreign language often involves learning cultural practices and habits (for example, food, weather) in the target-language country (BYRAM, 2014; BYRAM, GRIBKOVA; STARKEY, 2002). For this reason, the development of intercultural competence should go beyond the knowledge of cultural diversity in the representative of another culture.

When developing intercultural competence in teaching a foreign language for specific purposes, it is important to take into account the PEER model proposed by Holmes and

O'Neill (HOLMES; O'NEILL, 2012). The PEER model (preparation, engagement, evaluation, reflection) emphasizes that by establishing regular relationships through interaction with a "representative of another culture", students go through four interrelated stages. The first stage is to prepare students by asking them to identify their prejudices and stereotypes about other cultures before coming into contact with another culture and to talk about any relevant experience. The second stage is the engagement of students, that is, the stimulation of real interaction, which may be limited by the context of the classroom. Assessment is the third stage in which students interpret their interactions, preferably through written reports or an oral exchange of their thoughts with classmates. At the last stage (reflection), students are invited to critically comprehend their previous hypotheses, behavior, and communication (HOLMES; O'NEILL, 2012).

The project "Medical Education and Healthcare Abroad" is aimed at introducing students to the system of medical education and healthcare in the target-language countries. This project is implemented within the framework of the Foreign Language subject. The form of organization of work in the classroom (work in groups of 2-3 students) and the topic of the project itself motivate students (not only to study this topic but also to learn a foreign language), because they allow comparing medical education systems in Russia and the target-language countries, learn about student exchange programs, students can see the application of their knowledge and communicative competence in practice.

The project is carried out in the first term within classroom activities, part of the project is carried out as independent work. Independent work on the project plays an important role, because students in the same group have different levels of foreign language proficiency (this is a common situation in non-linguistic universities), and some of them need more time to complete this project.

At the first lesson, students get acquainted with the project. Students are invited to study the official website of the university, learn about its history, it is recommended to visit the Museum of the History of Medicine and the museum of the Medical University. As part of the acquaintance with the project, students are invited to watch a video where a Russian student talks about his experience of studying abroad (similar videos are available on social networks, for example, on the Campus France webpage). Students have to identify differences in the organization of medical education in Russia and in the target-language country based on this video. In order to motivate students to participate in this project, students are told about the possibility of an internship abroad in IFMSA, about the opportunity to go to

scientific conferences and continue their studies abroad (for example, in a master's degree program) if they speak a foreign language well.

At the first stage of this project, students are invited to prepare booklets about medical education and healthcare abroad, at the second stage of the project, students will prepare presentations about medical education and healthcare in the target-language country. Students work on this project in groups of 2-3 people (it is possible to distribute tasks within the group, for example, one student prepares material on the organization of medical education, another student prepares material on the organization of the healthcare system). When forming such groups, the level of foreign language proficiency is taken into account. Preferably, there should be one student in each group with a higher level of foreign language proficiency who helps the second student in the group, but does not do all the work for him/her. Students distribute the target-language countries so that the countries are not repeated.

The experience of preparing a report in a foreign language in front of an audience is important for students, as it increases their self-confidence and contributes to improving the level of foreign language proficiency. In addition, during the preparation of the report, students will learn how to make a good presentation and how to effectively present the topic of the project in a foreign language.

At all stages of work on the project, self-assessment and evaluation of projects of other students are planned, which help to develop a critical approach to their work and to the work of classmates, which, in turn, allows students to improve their own projects.

Within the framework of the project, a meeting is planned with a teacher of the Department of Public Health and Healthcare, who will introduce students to the healthcare system in Russia. The knowledge gained during the work on the project "Medical Education and Healthcare Abroad" can be used as part of the Public Health course in the third year of studies.

The involvement of a healthcare professional is an important part of the project, because, on the one hand, it increases the motivation of students (they see a teacher of one of the leading departments of the university who speaks a foreign language), on the other hand, it allows to emphasize interdisciplinary links (which is noted in the federal educational standard and is provided for by each syllabus at the university). In this case, a foreign language teacher works in tandem with a teacher of a major subject, while the former is responsible for the form (how to say, formulate a grammatically correct sentence), and the latter is responsible for the content. Interaction with a professional during the preparation of this project allows a foreign language teacher to choose authentic texts and materials for classes (interaction of

teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages and clinical departments is carried out not only within the framework of the described project: the opinion of teachers of clinical departments is taken into account when developing textbooks on foreign languages).

Results

The presented project allows to work on four aspects described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR): listening (watching videos about the healthcare system), reading (reading authentic texts, searching for information on the Internet in a foreign language), writing (making a booklet), and speaking (presenting the project to the group). In this case, we are talking about a broad approach the term of (JOHNS; DUDLEY-EVANS, 1991), while most textbooks and teaching aids used in teaching a foreign language at the university are focused on the development of one aspect (reading texts in the specialty) and are implemented within a narrow approach (the term of JOHNS; DUDLEY-EVANS, 1991).

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this article, language and culture are interrelated and cannot exist and be studied without each other. Researchers Zoranyan (2008), Lindner (2010), and Tang (2014) emphasize the need for the development of intercultural competence in the framework of the foreign language course; while other researchers (AGUILAR, 2018; BYRAM, 2014) believe that when developing courses and teaching a foreign language for specific purposes, teachers pay more attention to needs analysis, and the development of intercultural competence takes a back seat.

If, within the framework of the presented project, we rely on the definition of intercultural competence proposed by Fantini and Tirmizi (FANTINI; TIRMIZI, 2007, p. 12), we can say that students participate in the above-mentioned interaction at different levels. First of all, this is the so-called asynchronous interaction (watching a movie in French and reading texts), because this interaction requires effort and knowledge (sometimes comments from the teacher) to understand the realias of another country and culture. Then, during the implementation of this project, students can interact with foreign students who study at the medical university, which allows them to communicate in a foreign language, apply their knowledge in practice, and foreign students can introduce them to the realia of their countries. In this case, it is synchronous interaction.

Within the framework of this project, students get acquainted with the phenomena and realia of the target-language country (for example, numerus clausus), as well as with the

differences in the organization of medical education and healthcare in Russia and other countries.

In the context of studying a foreign language for specific purposes, we are not talking about cuisine, literature, or theater, which are mentioned by researchers (Byram, 2014); Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (BYRAM; GRIBKOVA; STARKEY, 2002) as cultural practices and habits. The discussion of the topic "Medical Education and Healthcare Abroad" allows to improve the knowledge of a foreign language, as well as to draw the attention of students to the differences and interaction between different cultures (AGUILAR, 2018, p. 31).

Conclusion

The implementation of this project corresponds to the PEER model (preparation, engagement, evaluation, reflection) proposed by Holmes and O'Neill (2012), as students prepare for the project (read texts, watch videos), participate in the project (prepare a booklet, a report, present the project to the audience) evaluate the projects of classmates and conduct self-assessment during the project (evaluation helps to develop reflection and critical thinking, which contributes to improving the quality of their projects, since this approach is extrapolated to their own projects).

The implementation of this project within the framework of the Foreign Language course at the medical university is aimed not only at the development of intercultural competence among students but also helps to increase the motivation of students to learn a foreign language. The participation of a healthcare specialist introduces an interdisciplinary element in this project.

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